

# **IMPRINT ON THE LAND**

## **LIFE BEFORE CAMP HOOD, 1820-1942**



BY  
**WILLIAM S. PUGSLEY**

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Produced by

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Log cabin in Bell County. Photograph courtesy of *TEXAS HIGHWAYS* magazine.

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# DEDICATION

The American people are grateful  
to the former residents of the Fort Hood lands,  
who sacrificed their property and homes  
so that we could remain free.  
Their stories should not be forgotten.



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## PREFACE

**W**e at Prewitt and Associates would like to commend the U.S. Army Fort Hood, and particularly members of the Cultural Resource Management (CRM) Program, for their enthusiastic support of this popular history book. After years of gathering detailed historical and archeological data in compliance with federal laws, the CRM staff felt compelled to go the extra step and produce a document for the general public, something that could draw upon this store of specialized and, admittedly, rather dry facts. While this popular history makes good use of CRM reports, statistics, and research, it also leans heavily on books and articles about the history of Bell and Coryell Counties, interspersing the narrative text with personal remembrances, photographs, and maps.

This volume endeavors to paint a very big picture in a small space—from the geological formation of Texas to the present day. Although the inhabitants with the longest connection to Fort Hood lands were Native Americans, their 10,000-year story does not receive its due here, and must await closer attention in a future volume. Instead, this book focuses on the Euro-American peoples who came to Fort Hood lands in the late 1840s. It gives some reasons for when and why they chose this place, then relates the trials, challenges, and victories they experienced over the next hundred years, ending with their removal during World War II. Throughout this book, Austin historian/writer Bill Pugsley attempts to fit the story of Euro-American settlement into a broader context. He shows how world and national events shaped Bell and

Coryell Counties and how circumstances in the two counties impacted the farms, ranches, and rural communities on Fort Hood lands.

This book represents one version of a long and complex tale. A book of this type cannot include even a modest portion of the many incredible stories written and/or remembered by the former residents of Fort Hood lands: stories about family members, friends and neighbors, and life as it was before the war. In sponsoring this book, the Army has made a commendable move toward preserving the prewar history of the region. While this volume is dedicated to the former residents, many of whom still live in Bell and Coryell Counties, it is intended for a larger audience—an audience throughout Texas and the United States—so that they too may know the history of this land, the contribution the residents made to the region, and the sacrifice they made for their country—one that should not be forgotten.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The historic research that culminated in the publication of this book and other volumes began in the mid 1990s when Fort Hood contracted with Prewitt and Associates, Inc. (PAI), to conduct a series of studies relating to the historic sites scattered across its 339 square miles of land. The work was coordinated by the current and former directors of the Cultural Resource Management Program, Department of Public Works, at Fort Hood: Dr. Jack Jackson from contract inception in 1995 to 1996, Dr. Kimball Smith from 1996 to 1999, and Dr. Cheryl Huckerby from 1999 to the present. Key personnel involved in the historic sites research projects were principal investigator Douglas K. Boyd; consulting historians Martha Doty Freeman, Amy E. Dase, and Russell Ward; and PAI staff historical archeologist Marie E. Blake.

The author would like to acknowledge the many people who helped make this book possible. Foremost on that list is Mr. Boyd, a vice president at PAI, who gave a novice writer a wonderful opportunity to create this popular history report. His good humor and enthusiastic support were most gratefully appreciated. Other PAI staff members also made substantial contributions to this project. Of particular note are Sandra Hannum, the graphics wizard who magically turned my pencil marks into elegant maps and graphs; Brian Wootan, who scanned and manipulated the photographic illustrations, and who was an integral part of the layout design team; Terry Sherrell, of Morgan Printing in Austin, who did a superb job on the final layout; Melissa C. Keenan, the editor who performed even greater feats of wonder

on my grammar and punctuation; Martha Doty Freeman and Ross C. Fields, who did additional and extensive editing; Karl Kibler, the geomorphologist who restrained what can only have been a powerful urge to rewrite or remove entirely my unorthodox explanation of Texas geomorphology; and finally, Marie E. Blake, the project manager who persevered until she found all of the illustrations on my wish list, made editorial contributions, and then continued as Doug's alter ego when he was called away on other projects. Her cheerful disposition and professionalism made the last, hair-pulling weeks of the project a pleasure.

I also would like to thank Mrs. Lalla R. Ward of Gatesville and Mrs. Anice Vance of Temple for their peer reviews and Dr. Cheryl Huckerby, Dr. Allan Morton, and Ms. Stephanie Bandy of the Department of Public Works at Fort Hood for reading a draft copy of this book. Their many helpful comments and suggestions gave me valued guidance for improving the text.

This popular history draws extensively from two years of diligent research and careful analysis by Martha Doty Freeman, Amy E. Dase, and Marie E. Blake, summarized in their report entitled *Agriculture and Rural Development on Fort Hood Lands, 1849-1942: National Register Assessments of 710 Historic Archeological Properties*. This report was the first place I turned before beginning each chapter and the final arbiter on all questions of fact.

The bibliography at the end of this work lists the dozens of historians in Bell and Coryell Counties upon whose experience and research I relied. In addition, I drew upon historic photographs and archival materials housed in The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; The Texas Collection, Baylor University and the Baylor University Library, Political Materials section; Texas State Library and Archives; Killeen Public Library; Copperas Cove Public Library; 4th Infantry Division Museum, Fort Hood; Fort Sam Houston Museum; *TEXAS HIGHWAYS* photographic archives; the Bell County Museum, Belton; and the Gatesville Public Library.

While much of the information contained in these chapters is from previously published sources, this book comes alive because of the remembrances of former residents, collected in oral history interviews, and the photographs donated from their personal collections. I would like to thank the following people for allowing me to use their photographs and oral history interviews: Mrs. Winifred Bell, Frank H. Black, Coryell County Genealogical Society, Mrs. W. H. Culp, Barney Duncan, Molly Duncan, John Gail Edwards, Mary Beth Graham Gartman, Mary Edwards Groves, John Haedge, Mrs. Sue

Mayborn, Betty Ruth Franklin Taylor, and Hope Edwards Turner. Grateful thanks also go to Wilma Colvin Edwards for sharing her magnificent collection of family photographs with us and granting us permission to reproduce them.

A very special thanks goes to Martha Doty Freeman, the person who introduced me to Doug Boyd, and with Amy Dase, provided me with three large boxes of research (each item carefully organized in color-coded folders). She read and astutely commented on various drafts. I covet her research skills, trust her advice, and wish I could bottle and sell her infectious laugh.

And finally, to my wife, Margaret Schlankey, who hugs me in the morning. You were right.

- 1918 World War I ends
- 1920 U.S. Army report concludes chance of United States fighting in Europe again is "exceedingly small"
- 1932 Nazi party gains 231 seats in German Reichstag  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt elected president in landslide
- 1933 Adolph Hitler appointed German chancellor
- 1936 Hitler and Mussolini declare Berlin-Rome Axis  
Roosevelt elected president for second term
- 1937 Japan invades seven major cities in China
- 1939 Roosevelt asks for \$552 million for defense  
Germany invades Poland  
Britain and France declare war on Germany  
U.S. Army has 130 outdated, battalion-sized camps in operation
- 1940 Churchill becomes prime minister of Great Britain (May 10)  
Germany invades France, Roosevelt refuses \$657 million appropriation for U.S. Army (May)  
France falls, Roosevelt increases U.S. Army funding (June)  
Roosevelt signs Selective Service Act and initiates draft (September)  
U.S. Army authorized to increase size to nine hundred thousand men (September 16)  
Roosevelt elected president for third term (November)  
Congress approves \$9 billion budget for U.S. Army (December)
- 1941 U.S. Army begins locating and purchasing sites for training camps (January)  
Germany invades Russia (January)  
Frank Mayborn creates War Projects Committee of Temple Chamber of Commerce (January)  
Forty-six new U.S. Army camps under construction across United States (February)  
Mayborn learns U.S. Army wants to build four or five division-sized training camps (February)  
Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Bruce placed in charge of U.S. Army Planning Branch (May)  
U.S. Army leaning toward Valley Mills site for training camp in central Texas (May)  
U.S. Army tests new tank tactics in field maneuvers in Tennessee—tanks win (June)  
75-mm antitank gun exhibited to Lieutenant Colonel Bruce at third U.S. Army antitank conference in Washington, D.C. (July)  
U.S. Army Planning Branch calls for separate antitank battalions, one per division (August)  
U.S. Army tests mobile antitank guns in maneuvers in Louisiana—antitank guns win (September)  
Senator Tom Connally announces Valley Mills as site of new antitank training center (November)  
Frank Mayborn visits General Donovan at the U.S. Army's Eighth Corps Area headquarters in San Antonio (November 24)

# FROM A THUMBPRINT ON A MAP

1

## Prelude to Change

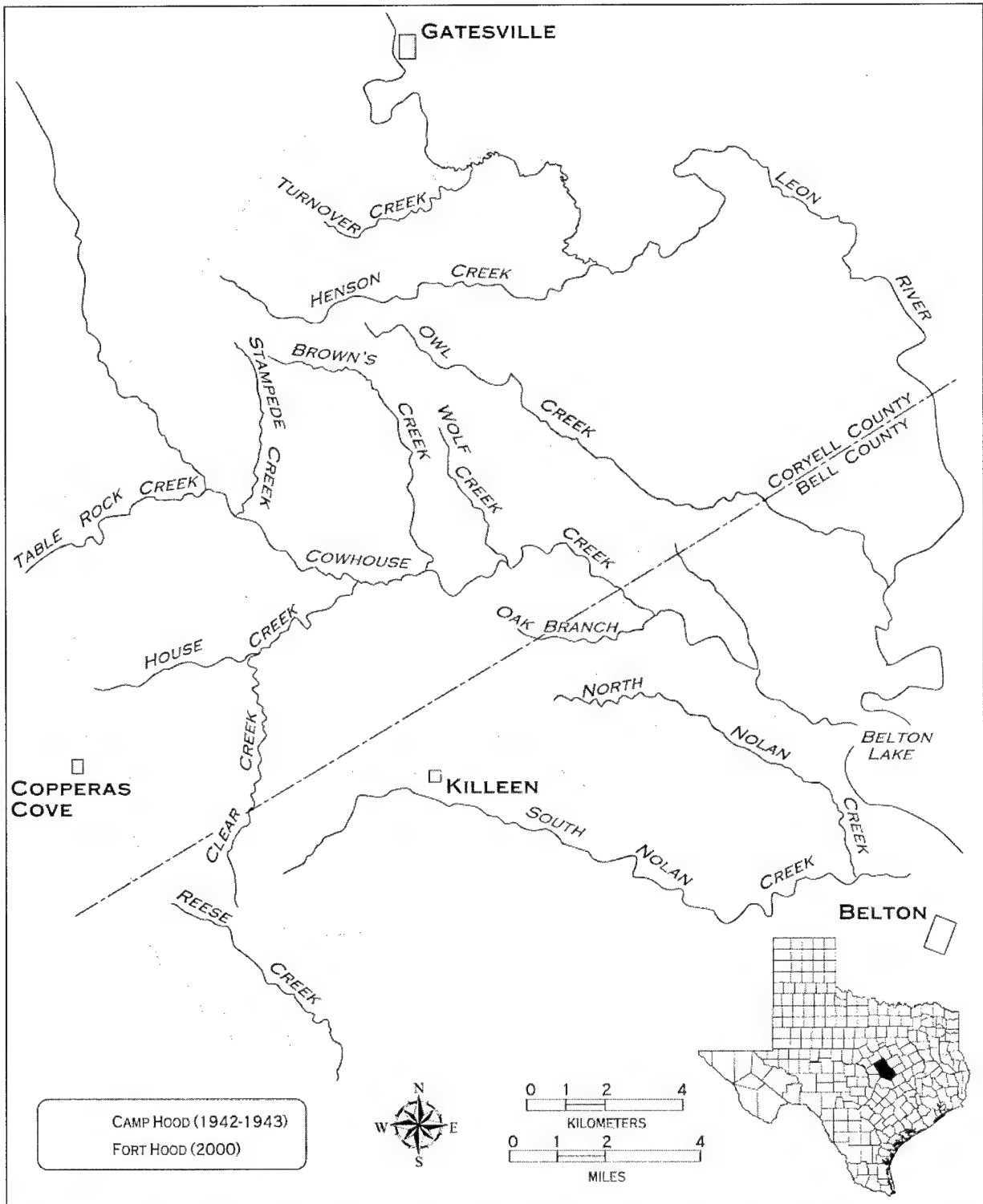
On a Texas road map, Fort Hood now occupies about the same space as a thumbprint, an oval pressed between Gatesville to the north in Coryell County and Killeen to the south in Bell County. But size is relative, even misleading, because that quarter-sized spot on the map marks one of the largest Army training bases in the United States. In fact, Fort Hood ranks among the largest military facilities in the world.<sup>1</sup> Upon closer inspection, one can see that the outline of the base looks less like an oval than the head of a large, floppy-eared dog holding the blue rag doll of Belton Lake in its mouth. When the base was first established in 1942, it was smaller and had more of a pear-like shape, a pear standing on its stem. Today, the "core" of the camp still lies within Coryell County, while the "stem" reaches into Bell County and hooks around the west side of Killeen, the town that acts as the main entrance to the fort. Within the boundaries of the original camp lie two major streams, several creeks and valleys, a dozen or so limestone hills, and until 1942, the year the Army arrived, a handful of small communities and several hundred farms and ranches linked together by unimproved dirt roads, telephone wire, and rural traditions.

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew D. Bruce (promoted to major general by 1942), the training camp's first commandant, named the installation in honor of a well-known Texas war hero, General John Bell Hood, the Confederate general commanding the Texas Brigade during the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the second world war, the tank and antitank training post went by the name of Camp Hood, suggesting that in time the tents would be folded, the men moved, and the ground returned to its original

Major General Andrew D. Bruce in 1943, first commandant of the antitank facility at Camp Hood (courtesy of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Museum, Fort Hood, Texas).







Boundaries of Camp Hood, 1942-1943, and Fort Hood, 2000.

occupants. Although the Army decommissioned a number of camps established during World War II, the central Texas tank training camp had proven its worth, and the Defense Department converted Camp Hood into a permanent military facility called Fort Hood, thus assuring long-term stability of the military base and the surrounding communities. There was no going back after the war.

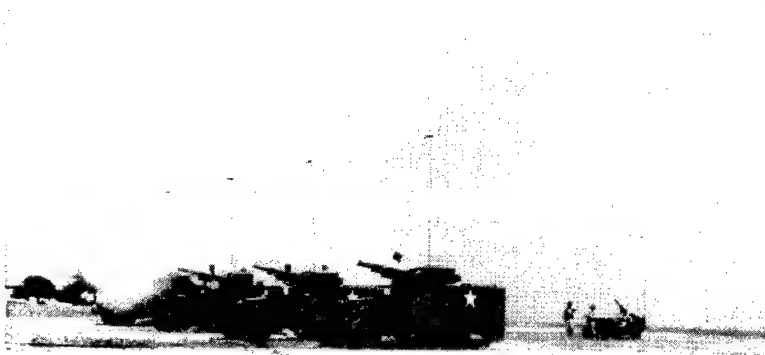
Those living along the Cowhouse and other creeks in 1941 didn't realize they were living on the future location of Camp Hood. The Army brass was almost as surprised with the choice as the residents; the final site selection, the choice of the pear-shaped region in southern Coryell and northern Bell Counties known as the Killeen site, came in the eleventh hour, after the camp was supposed to be operational; in fact, after another site had already been selected. The reasons for choosing this particular patch of land were based, as they usually are in such cases, on a mixture of geology, economics, politics, and the interplay of personalities. But desperate events in Europe set the pace, a pace that compelled the United States military to move fast and keep moving.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1940, U.S. Army generals watched with apprehension as German tank divisions made quick, easy work of European defenses, pushing through Denmark in less than thirty-six hours, rolling across Holland in five days and Belgium in eighteen. In June, German tanks smashed French defenses and surrounded Paris within four days.<sup>3</sup> Up until the day France fell, the U.S. Army operated largely without troops, recruits, and reserves, on a budget scaled back for peacetime. The Army had fewer than 220,000 enlisted servicemen and no means to acquire the manpower they needed until Congress passed a one-year draft in August 1940. Despite substantial budget increases later that year, the Army's new recruits still trained with broomsticks, while soldiers stood guard with leftover hardware.<sup>4</sup>

In September 1940, three months after German tanks paraded past the Eiffel Tower, the U.S. Army decided to shift its antitank tactics away from the passive, in-place mode that had proven so disastrous in Europe toward a more-flexible, offensive posture.<sup>5</sup> Army personnel arrived at that conclusion without the advice of the Tactical Defense Section, because that Section, an arm of the Planning Branch, would not be established for another seven months (in April 1941). Once established, the Tactical Defense Section could design its antitank offensives only after it selected an antitank weapon. That choice was made four months later, in July 1941, after General George Patton brought summer maneuvers in Louisiana to an early halt, having successfully staged a "miniblitzkrieg" that pitted his tanks against a larger ground force armed with older, truck-pulled antitank guns. The Army quickly devised a new antitank



General John Bell Hood, Confederate leader of the Texas Brigade (courtesy of the Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin).



M3 Half-track, an early antitank vehicle, ca. 1943 (courtesy of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Museum, Fort Hood, Texas).

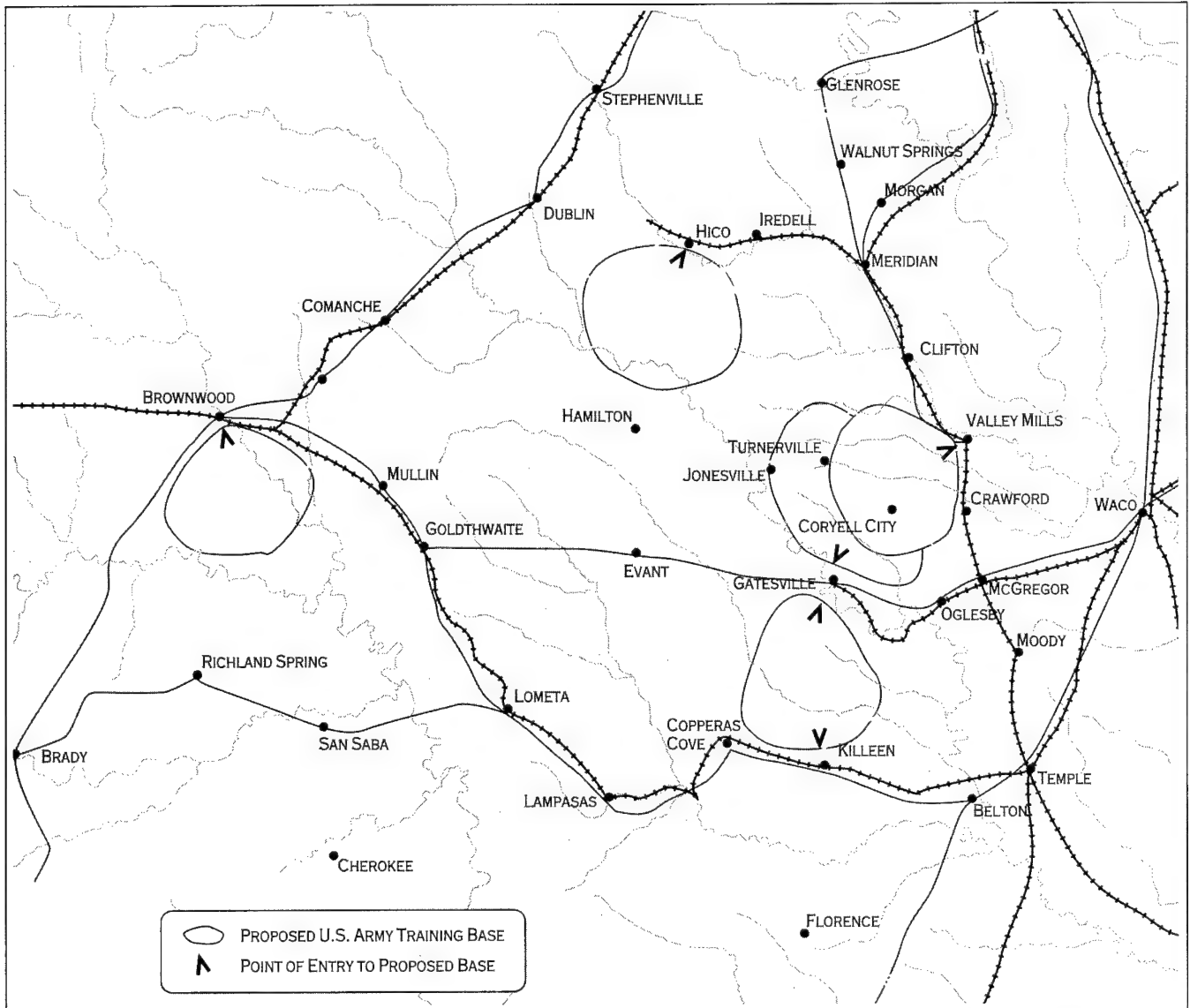
weapon—a 75-mm gun mounted on a half-track truck—but was unable to field test it until November 1941. Had Congress failed to renew the draft or extend the current enlistment period after October (they did so by only one vote), no one would have been around to field test this new weapon. And most of the infantrymen testing the truck-mounted gun had never even seen a tank, stationary or moving, much less fired at one. The Army was playing catch up, and they had a long way to go in a hurry. In two weeks they would be at war.

Official reports on the training exercises made it clear that the Army needed a training facility for infantrymen and officers who might be called to face a German Panzer division in the very near future. The facility needed to be of sufficient size to practice large-scale mock battles with a couple of infantry divisions, tanks, and the new antitank gun mounted on a half-track vehicle. The training facility most generals considered to be a template for the new antitank facility was Camp Gordon, located outside Augusta, Georgia. It had been built in 1917 to train soldiers to defend themselves against another British-designed, German-improved weapon—the machine gun. But that forty-thousand-acre facility was shaped like a fat cigar, and would not permit free-ranging tank maneuvers.<sup>6</sup> They needed some place a bit rounder and twice the size.

The War Department was already moving in that direction. In February 1941, the Army began laying plans for a seventy-five-thousand-acre tract in a rural setting where four or five divisions could deploy and train. The essential requirements were availability of railhead for easy movement of troops and equipment, plentiful water, hotels for the officers, and recreational facilities for the men. General Brees, the man in charge of locating the camp, had a “tender spot” for Texas,<sup>7</sup> and while he ruled out east Texas as impractical, the general believed central or west Texas held definite possibilities.

### **Frank Mayborn and the Politics of Place**

Frank Mayborn, the thirty-seven-year-old publisher of the *Temple Daily Telegram*, caught wind of these plans through inside connections cultivated over the previous two years as chairman of the Temple Chamber of Commerce's



Proposed U.S. Army training base sites in central Texas during the summer of 1941.

Industrial Development Committee. The square-jawed Mayborn looked like a cigar-smoking editor out of central casting, but his eyes revealed a man on the move, and his graying hair bespoke a mature mind with plans and ideas. Community leaders in five other counties had the same ideas, and soon heard the same news. Each county, still suffering from the Great Depression, desperately sought the economic boost that could come from a large government project. A military facility in their area, even one that might swallow half the county and permanently remove that land from the county tax base, was an opportunity they could not ignore. They reached for whatever political strings they could pull, which in most cases led to W. R. "Bob" Poage, the Waco-born congressman who represented the Eleventh Congressional District. Poage found himself in an impossible situation; to press the claim of one county meant thwarting the others. In an effort to be fair to all, Poage



Frank W. Mayborn (1903-1987) was a politically influential leader in Bell County who served variously as editor and publisher of the *Temple Daily Telegraph* from 1929 to 1987 and the *Killeen (Daily) Herald* from 1952 to 1987 (courtesy of Mrs. Sue Mayborn, *Temple Daily Telegraph*, Temple, Texas, ca. 1970).



As U.S. Representative for the Eleventh Congressional District from 1937 to 1978, Congressman William Robert "Bob" Poage was known as "Mr. Agriculture." He spent his career trying to improve life in rural America (courtesy of the Collections of Political Materials, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, ca. 1970).

could not vigorously champion one over the others. Although Brown County to the west, Bosque County to the north, and McLennan County to the east were among the leading contenders, Bell and Coryell Counties had the ambitious Frank Mayborn as their chief spokesman, and Mayborn had connections throughout Texas, including the beleaguered Congressman Poage. Mayborn had vigorously supported Poage in his first successful bid for Congress and remained a friend and contributor.<sup>8</sup> But through the Industrial Development Committee, Mayborn had also established connections with other Washington politicians—Jesse Jones, Oliveta Culp Hobby, and a young congressman named Lyndon Johnson who had been instrumental in landing a naval base in Corpus Christi. For its part, McLennan County had as their main spokesman Senator Tom Connally, a native son of the county and a powerful Texas senator. In the end that connection proved decisive. Despite an October 11 report by the Army's site selection team stating that the region between Killeen and Gatesville would make a good site, the Army had another place in mind, one that was agreeable to Connally and the other McLennan County leaders in Waco. In early November, less than thirty days before Pearl Harbor, Connally announced the Army's selection for the new antitank training camp in an area near Valley Mills, twenty miles west of Waco. It was politics as usual. Everyone else went home, but Frank Mayborn continued fighting.

Mayborn was a man possessed. Bell County businesses needed the base camp; they deserved the base camp. The battle was not over yet. On Thanksgiving Day, Mayborn gathered a delegation of county judges from Bell, Lampasas, and Coryell Counties, along with leading citizens from Killeen and Gatesville, and headed for the Army's Eighth Corps Area headquarters at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.<sup>9</sup> Although the Service Division had done all preliminary site selection (and Lieutenant Colonel Bruce would eventually command the

facility), the final choice concerning where to put the camp came down to General Richard Donovan, commander of the Eighth Corps Area. As far as he was concerned the choice had been made: Valley Mills.

Once inside General Donovan's office, Mayborn gave a spirited critique of the Valley Mills site, listing the costs and problems overlooked in the Army's recommendation. When it was over, Donovan gave him a careful inspection. Frank Mayborn's biographers recreate this fateful scene, a scene that has assumed the same legendary proportions as Travis drawing a line in the sand at the Alamo:<sup>10</sup>

General Donovan said, 'Young man, you don't think much of the United States Army, do you?'

Mayborn held up the report on the Valley Mills site and replied, 'I don't think much of this report. But if I weren't thinking a lot about the United States, I wouldn't be down here.'

Donovan studied him carefully before asking, 'Where are you talking about?'

Mayborn pointed to a location on the general's map, and Donovan put his thumb on the spot. . . . The Temple newspaper publisher then traced a line around Donovan's thumb on the map, and the general initialed it, promising that he would order a new inspection of the area.

In a dramatic reversal, the Eighth Corps Area announced on January 15, 1942, that the antitank training camp would be located in southern Coryell County and part of northern Bell County, the exact region marked by Donovan's thumb print. Within four months, Camp Hood was up and running. Even at that breakneck pace, camp construction was behind schedule.

### **Past into History**

So it was that the Camp Hood lands came into being. Behind closed doors, in a distant city, business leaders who had the most to gain urged one military commander to make a decision affecting hundreds of families. Similar land takings occurred throughout the country that year. It may not have seemed fair, but the decision was made under the imminent threat of war. The security of the United States was at stake.



U.S. Senator Tom Connally (1877-1963), a Democrat, was an influential man in Texas politics for many decades (PPC-Tom Connally, CN Number 10270, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).



General Richard Donovan was Commander of the Eighth Corps Area, San Antonio, Texas, in 1941-1942 (courtesy of the Fort Sam Houston Museum, San Antonio, Texas).

Because camp construction was already behind schedule, changing rural farm and ranch land into military land became urgent. This transition came with confusion, interwoven with dazed chaos and hurried resignation. For some the experience was a little haphazard and inefficient, and a little too depressing or overwhelming, or even traumatic. But the people who gave their lands would never forget those four months, nor erase the feeling of panic and sit-down-and-cry-but-don't-have-enough-time frustration as their parents and spouses worried and struggled, cried, shouted, pounded tables, slammed doors, and then at the oddest moments laughed out loud, laughed at some odd little comment or expression until the tears ran and they couldn't breathe, then slowly wiped their eyes and fell silent before once more returning to the kitchen table, or the phone (for those who had one) and trying to find some place to move the entire family, all the kids, the clothes, the pots and pans and tools; then find some place new to farm, some place to put their livestock, their cattle, their sheep, pigs, chickens, and horses—or a least someone willing to buy them at a fair rate—even if that meant calling in all favors, asking any relative, friend, or acquaintance for advice, or sympathy, or a quick loan, or asking for help moving livestock, moving farm equipment, or for the lucky few, moving their house down the road to a new lot, or help finding an apartment in town, or a house in another county, or getting help packing belongings, or help persuading relatives to leave their homes. They needed so much help, and so did everyone else they knew, but once that day came—the day when everything was packed, boxed, shoved in, tied down, and ready to leave, then they could stand at the open door of their old Ford truck and for the sake of memory look down at the gray soil now covered in spring grass and shot with blue, pink, and yellow wildflowers, and look up one last time at the flat-top hills, covered as always in green oak and cedar, and breathe the air, and then drive away before the soldiers came and made the land their own.

The sudden arrival of the Army in the spring of 1942 may have bonded most of those living on the Camp Hood lands with a common experience of loss, departure, and transition, but the similarities ended there. Building the towns, laying the roads, constructing the homes, and establishing the farms and ranches had taken almost a century to accomplish. The last chapter may have been the same to everyone, but each person, each community in that larger narrative had its own beginning and middle.

In the decades since World War II, the Fort Hood area has flourished; its population has increased and businesses have prospered. Back in 1941, the

region was struggling to haul itself out of the Depression. Much of the rural population was still without electricity or phone service, none of the interconnecting roads were surfaced, and many of the smaller towns were suffering a slow decline, with more and more farmers shopping in the larger cities. Cotton had ceased to be the cash crop and savior of the rural South, and farmers struggled to find new sources of income from soil that was rife with limestone. With the arrival of the army base, the population of the Killeen-Temple-Belton metropolitan area now ranks in the top twenty Texas cities, surpassing Bryan-College Station and even outranking Waco. Released from the cycles of boom and bust agriculture, Bell County has a stable, diversified economy.

Time has brought renewed interest in the history of the region. Over the past decade the Army has conducted detailed surveys, searching for historic and prehistoric artifacts and locations where people lived. They have sponsored long-term research into the history of the region, its inhabitants and lifestyles, from the earliest settlements to the 1940s and 1950s. Official reports have documented efforts to locate and protect sites with historic importance; this narrative draws, whenever possible, from information contained in those reports.

The historic foundation, for the most part, comes from a number of well-known books on Bell and Coryell Counties that are supplemented whenever possible by quotations from those who knew the land best, particularly John Chrisman, an early settler in Gatesville. Interspersed throughout the story, the reader will find short pieces highlighting various aspects of everyday life in the 1930s—routines and traditions of that era that, in some cases, stretched back to the pioneer days.

And finally, please know that this book was never meant as a definitive history of the region, but rather as an introduction to one small place set within Bell and Coryell Counties. It was not written for the generation who lived upon the land, who know these and other stories better than this book could ever hope to convey. Rather it is directed at those who may not have heard the tales and who will never see those hills and streams as they once were. It is meant to send the curious child in search of more stories, filled with questions about a bygone era, as well as hold safe the memories for those who have yet to come. When they finish this book they will know, as we hope you will know, that at its heart, it is a memorial to all those who struggled with the land for so many years, but especially to those who sacrificed their homes and homelands during a time of war, who left before they had time enough to say goodbye.



1941 Tank Destroyer Tactical and Firing Center opens at Fort Meade,  
Maryland (December 1)

Japan attacks Pearl Harbor (December 7)

United States declares war on Japan (December 8)

United States declares war on Germany (December 11)

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Bruce tours area between Killeen  
and Gatesville (December 20)

1942 U.S. Army announces new Tank Destroyer Tactical and Firing  
Center named Camp Hood (January 10)

Killeen newspapers report news (January 14)

# A SPECIAL KIND OF LAND, A SPECIAL KIND OF PLACE

## The Needs of an Army

When Frank Mayborn led a delegation of county judges and business leaders from Lampasas, Coryell, and Bell Counties down to the Army's Eighth Corps Area headquarters in November 1941, the site for the new Army training camp had already been determined and publicly announced as a location near Valley Mills, about twenty miles west of Waco. Eloquence alone would not be enough to convince General Richard Donovan and the other Army brass to change their minds. Mayborn and company had to prove that their alternate site, the region between Killeen and Gatesville, was particularly suited to the Army's needs and could meet and exceed their criteria for the training base. That is precisely what they did.

In deciding to build on the Killeen site after choosing the Valley Mills site, the Army spared the farmers in one region while irrevocably changing the lives of hundreds of others. The Army made an about-face that profoundly affected the residents living between Killeen and Gatesville, causing many farmers to ask themselves, why us and not them? Why here and not there? Ultimately, the answer lay in the peculiar geography of the area, an area known as the Lampasas Cut Plain. But the search did not start out that way.

When the War Department began its site selection process in February 1941, Frank Mayborn received a confidential report from a business contact in Washington outlining the main criteria for an Army base in Texas. The site should have "a railhead for movement of supplies and equipment, as well as men; water, and plenty of it; hotel facilities within a reasonable distance from the camp site, and one of the more major problems is recreation for the men."<sup>1</sup> At first glance it is difficult to appreciate the strategic importance of hotels and recreational facilities (meaning of course, restaurants, movie theaters, and bars) in the construction of an antitank training post, but past experience had shown these to be necessary components of a division-level

Army base, elements that could determine the success or failure of the operation. One might think that the Army would add other criteria to the list as the selection process narrowed, but according to Mayborn, the Army doggedly sought these same four items throughout the ten-month selection process, while largely discounting other factors (such as climate, for instance).

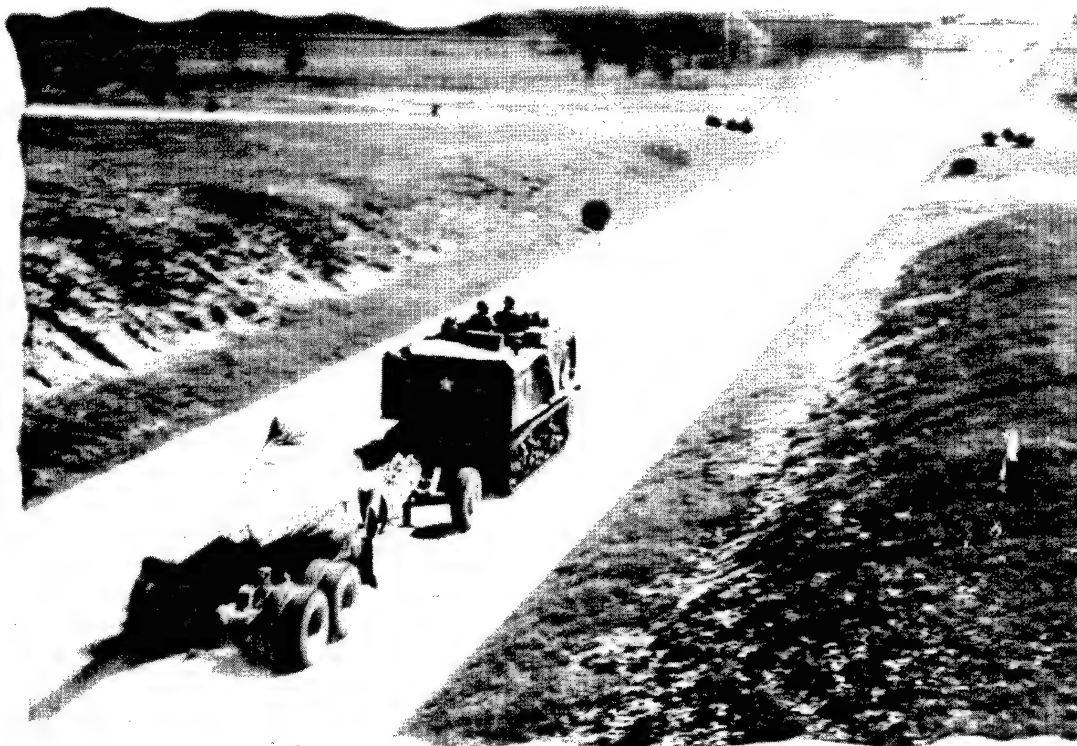
The Army preferred the south for training troops because the warmer climate allowed more dry, sunny days for field exercises. As the Army saw it, most anywhere in Texas, but particularly the middle latitudes, would fulfill their criterion for climate. This narrowed the selection to three main regions in the state—east, west, or central Texas. Dense pine forests and high occupancy rates removed east Texas from consideration almost from the beginning. The Army needed sparsely populated flatlands for staging mock tank battles. This practically defines west Texas, and the Army inspected several possible locations in that part of the state; all were declined, perhaps because of the noticeable deficit of hotels, restaurants, and movie theaters, not to mention water. Central Texas had the right combination of climate, space, and population, as well as everything else the Army needed. In short, the criteria Mayborn received in early 1941 virtually assured a location somewhere in central Texas.

Geographers and cartographers differ as to the geomorphic definition of central Texas, as a region distinct from north-central Texas (home to Dallas and Fort Worth), or south-central Texas, which is actually divided between the Gulf Coastal Plain region and the Rio Grande Valley. Central Texas contains about forty counties in the middle of the state.<sup>2</sup> The eastern line falls somewhere between Interstate 45 and Interstate 35, the southern boundary runs along U.S. Highway 90 from San Antonio to the Rio Grande, the western limit varies but generally follows a line from Del Rio to Abilene, and the northern border lies somewhat shy of Interstate 20. Central Texas had good farmland, three major rivers, rolling hills, and several mid-sized towns, so it was not surprising that all four of the locations selected as finalists were located there. In the end, the contest boiled down to a standoff between Waco and Temple. Waco sponsored the Valley Mills site (straddling the line between Bosque and McLennan Counties), while Temple, with support from Belton and Gatesville, sponsored the region north of Killeen (straddling the boundary between Bell and Coryell Counties).

Valley Mills had a distinct advantage as far as railroad transportation was concerned because it lay within the spokes of an enormous web of railroads that converged on Waco, just twenty miles away. To its credit, the Killeen site

was serviced by two major rail lines—the Santa Fe into Killeen and the Cotton Belt into Gatesville. Both rail companies owned a network of rails that could connect cities across the country. But what Frank Mayborn appreciated more, perhaps, than the Army did, was the importance of highways. Paved highways were still a recent development, and unlike the interstate system built after World War II, the first phase of highway construction in the 1920s provided only two narrow lanes of pavement, gravel shoulders, and few, if any, overpasses. Nevertheless, such highways were an expensive undertaking, even with federal assistance, and particularly during the Depression. Few rural counties in Texas had more than one paved road, and many had none at all.

But those that did had a distinct advantage: access to unscheduled, all-weather truck transportation, a valued alternative to the railroads. According to the story, Mayborn told General Donovan that while Valley Mills was near the rail hub at Waco, it had few access roads and “not a highway to anywhere.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, 1939 county road maps show a paved highway connecting Waco with Valley Mills, heading up to Meridian and points north. Designated State Route 67, the road was older than either highway leading to the Killeen site—U.S. Highway 84 into Gatesville and the just-completed U.S. Highway 190 into Killeen. All three highways intersected U.S. Highway 81 (later to become Interstate 35), the leading north-south highway in central Texas. Any site that centered on Valley Mills would have drawn upon State Route 67, so it is difficult to understand why Mayborn would have used a lack of roads as one of his arguments against Valley Mills.



Heavy artillery moves toward Fort Hood on U.S. Highway 84 west of Evant, March 1945 (courtesy of *TEXAS HIGHWAYS*).

For recreational facilities, the Valley Mills site relied upon its close proximity to Waco. Entertaining tens of thousands of soldiers during their off-duty hours required dozens of theaters, restaurants, and bars. Separately, the communities of Killeen, Copperas Cove, Gatesville, and Belton could not compete with Waco in size or accommodations, but as a group, they could provide most of the needed services, and do so with less travel than from Waco to the Valley Mills site. When Temple was tossed into the mix the two areas were about equal, especially when including support facilities such as hospitals, airfields, and office space. Moreover, whatever Killeen lacked in bars and restaurants, its businessmen could easily build.

From Mayborn's perspective, the site selection team seemed to be acting as if cost mattered less than finding the right location. Perhaps the Army believed that the strengthened provisions for eminent domain added to the Second War Powers Act, then winding its way through Congress, would make the cost of land irrelevant.<sup>4</sup> But Mayborn knew from communication with congressional leaders that cost was very much a factor.<sup>5</sup> He continually raised the issue and in San Antonio made it one of his main arguments.

The Valley Mills site lay in the middle of the rolling farmlands of the Blackland Prairie, a collection of rich, dark soils that were ideal for growing bountiful crops, especially cotton. Although the Depression had sucked the life out of the cotton market, leaving many farmers struggling to make ends meet, farmland in the Blackland Prairie still retained its relative value in Texas, especially when compared to farms north of Killeen. The entire region between Gatesville and Killeen, on the other hand, lay in what is known as the Lampasas Cut Plain, a limestone plateau cut into strips by water erosion. Even prime bottom-land acreage fell short of soils found in the Blackland Prairie, and what little arable ground existed in the area lay wedged between rock-strewn slopes topped with an impenetrable limestone caprock. This shortage of top quality soils kept farm values depressed across the southwestern two-thirds of Coryell County.

Land around Valley Mills fetched more money per acre, and once word got around that the Army was seriously considering the Valley Mills site, farm prices in the vicinity steadily increased through the late summer and early fall of 1941.<sup>6</sup> As a counter move, Frank Mayborn asked the Gatesville Chamber of Commerce to draw up a comparison of tax assessments; this document showed that land in eastern Coryell County near Valley Mills yielded in excess of 60 percent more tax revenue than property in the southern half of the county, the heart of the Lampasas Cut Plain.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, there were

more people per square mile around Valley Mills than between Killeen and Gatesville—more families to move, more lives to disrupt. Mayborn thought the price comparison made a convincing case for shifting the site away from populated farmlands on the Blackland Prairie. However, the differential in values did not dissuade the Army, perhaps because Waco's proximity to Valley Mills so completely fulfilled the other criteria.

Aside from the comparatively higher cost of real estate and the greater number of families living around Valley Mills, the location had other hidden costs. For instance, an underground gas pipeline bisected the area, and removing or rerouting the pipe would be disruptive and expensive. There was also a Norwegian community near Valley Mills whose sturdy limestone houses would be prohibitively expensive to move.<sup>8</sup> Taken together, Mayborn summarized, the Killeen site had access to the same facilities, better transportation coverage, none of the costly disadvantages, and all at a cheaper price per acre. Subsequent actions would show that the "pipeline" and "Norwegian community" arguments were as hollow as the "highway" argument, because a similar pipeline ran through the middle of the Gatesville-Killeen site without serious consequence, and the Army rarely allowed homes to be relocated from Camp Hood.<sup>9</sup> After all was said and done, the Valley Mills site still had one apparent advantage: water.

The Valley Mills site had the Bosque River and proven underground water reserves. Despite a geologist's report on the existence of underground water reserves in the Lampasas Cut Plain and the existence of numerous hand-dug wells on farms throughout the area, General Richard Donovan insisted on drilling a test well before agreeing to the alternative site. Clearly, the area held enough water to supply the approximately six thousand souls who lived in and around Killeen and Gatesville, but Donovan knew that in a matter of months the population would swell by a factor of ten. Calculating average water consumption of three to five gallons per person per day, the Army needed access to a quarter million gallons of water daily. Water was of such critical importance that Donovan would not rely on geological speculation alone; he needed proof.

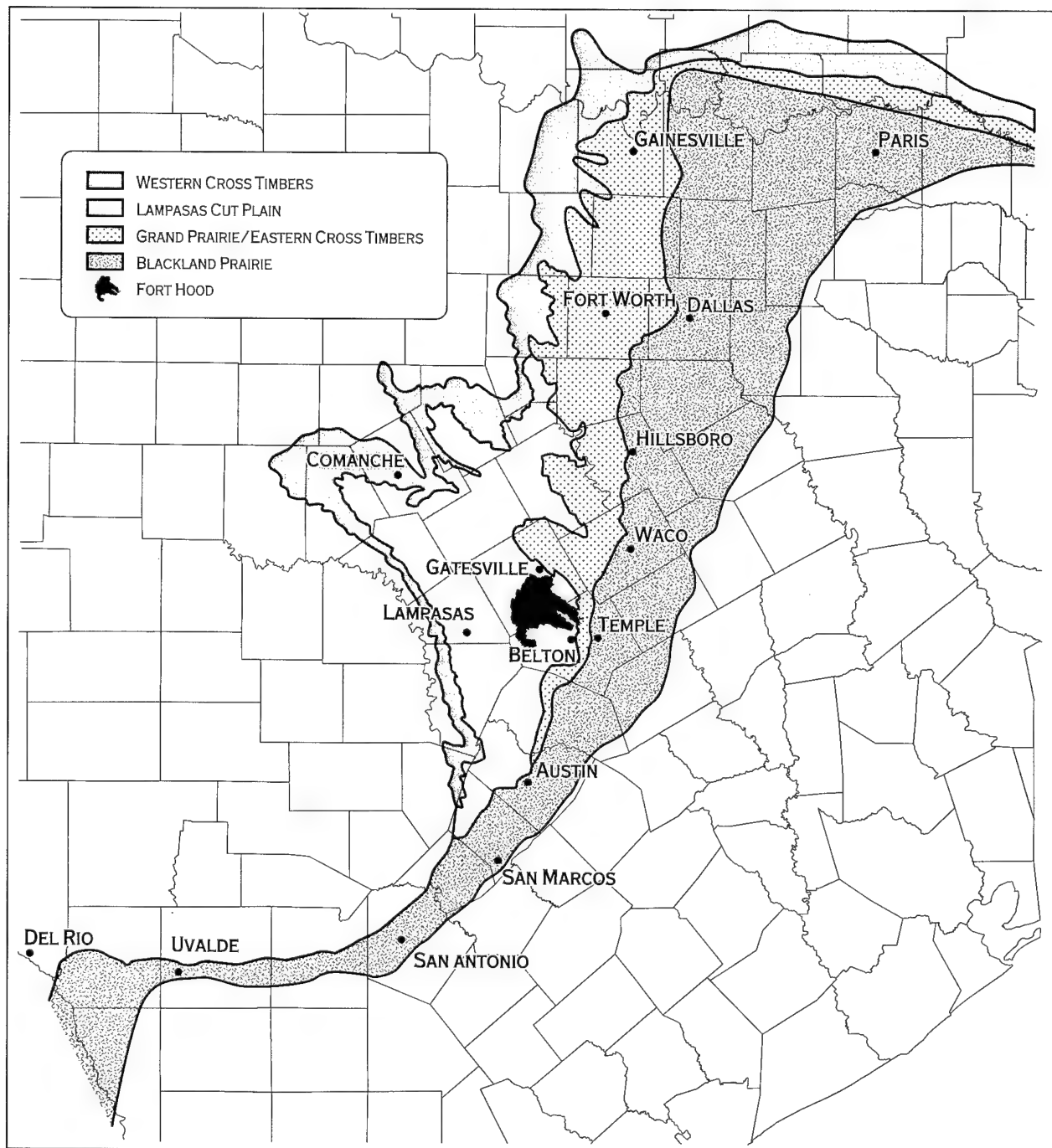
Immediately following the Thanksgiving meeting with General Donovan, Frank Mayborn and the other delegates commissioned a full-scale drilling test near the Lampasas River. After several weeks of fruitless drilling, the contractor (who apparently had ties to Waco businessmen and was reluctant to complete the tests in the time allotted) finally struck the aquifer noted in the geology report; with it came fresh, plentiful water.<sup>10</sup> That same afternoon,

## Imprint on the Land

January 10, 1942, Mayborn reported those findings to Donovan's office. Five days later, the Army reversed its earlier decision and authorized the camp to be established on the Killeen site.

With the exception of water supplies, and perhaps land values, the leading factors in choosing the Killeen site over other locations in Texas were all manmade structures—water wells, pipelines, railroads, and restaurants—not topography. If the Army thought broad open fields provided the best ground for tank and antitank maneuvers, they never made it known. If they had

Physiographic regions  
of central Texas  
(adapted from  
Hill 1901).



reservations about the cramped, hilly region of the Lampasas Cut Plain, they never expressed them. In 1941, the Army apparently held no strong preference—hills or plains, limestone plateaus or rolling pastures, any configuration would suffice for Camp Hood.

After the war, when the Army was reviewing which bases to close and consolidate and which ones to make permanent facilities, the distinctive advantages of the topography and geology at Camp Hood rose in importance. In 1989, General Robert M. Shoemaker summarized the specific advantages offered by Fort Hood's terrain, saying that the rolling hills in the west are similar to "great temperate areas of the world" (as in central Europe and Bosnia), and the steeper hills and roads in the middle section are "much like in the mountains." To the east, the densely wooded areas around Belton Lake offer "ideal areas for training for war in jungles." Although oak and juniper trees are not jungle vegetation, General Shoemaker noted that "it presents the same problem militarily."<sup>1</sup> And finally, the dusty gray soil along the slopes and bottomlands enabled the tank commanders to appreciate sandy conditions they would encounter in Desert Storm. As General Shoemaker made clear, our tank battalions have faced every conceivable type of terrain—from broad plains to steep mountain passes, jungles to desert—and the region beneath General Donovan's thumb enclosed a good number of these topographical variations.

### **The Geology of the Lampasas Cut Plain**

For all of its obvious military advantages, the Lampasas Cut Plain is one of the least known geological regions in the state, even for those living in central Texas. On the other hand, the best known and, in fact, the defining topographical region in central Texas is the Edwards Plateau, a series of undulating, oak-clad hills that create the Texas Hill Country. The outer edge of this plateau, referred to geologically as the Balcones Escarpment, rises abruptly from prairie lands along the southern and eastern edges. The escarpment imparts a distinctive "J" shape to the plateau, tracing a straight line from Del Rio to San Antonio, then curving northward through San Marcos to Austin and beyond. The Lampasas Cut Plain stands north and west of the Balcones Escarpment.

Four of the five counties in central Texas that competed for Camp Hood—Brown, Bosque, Bell, and Coryell—have substantial portions of their areas within the Lampasas Cut Plain. Most of McLennan County lies within the

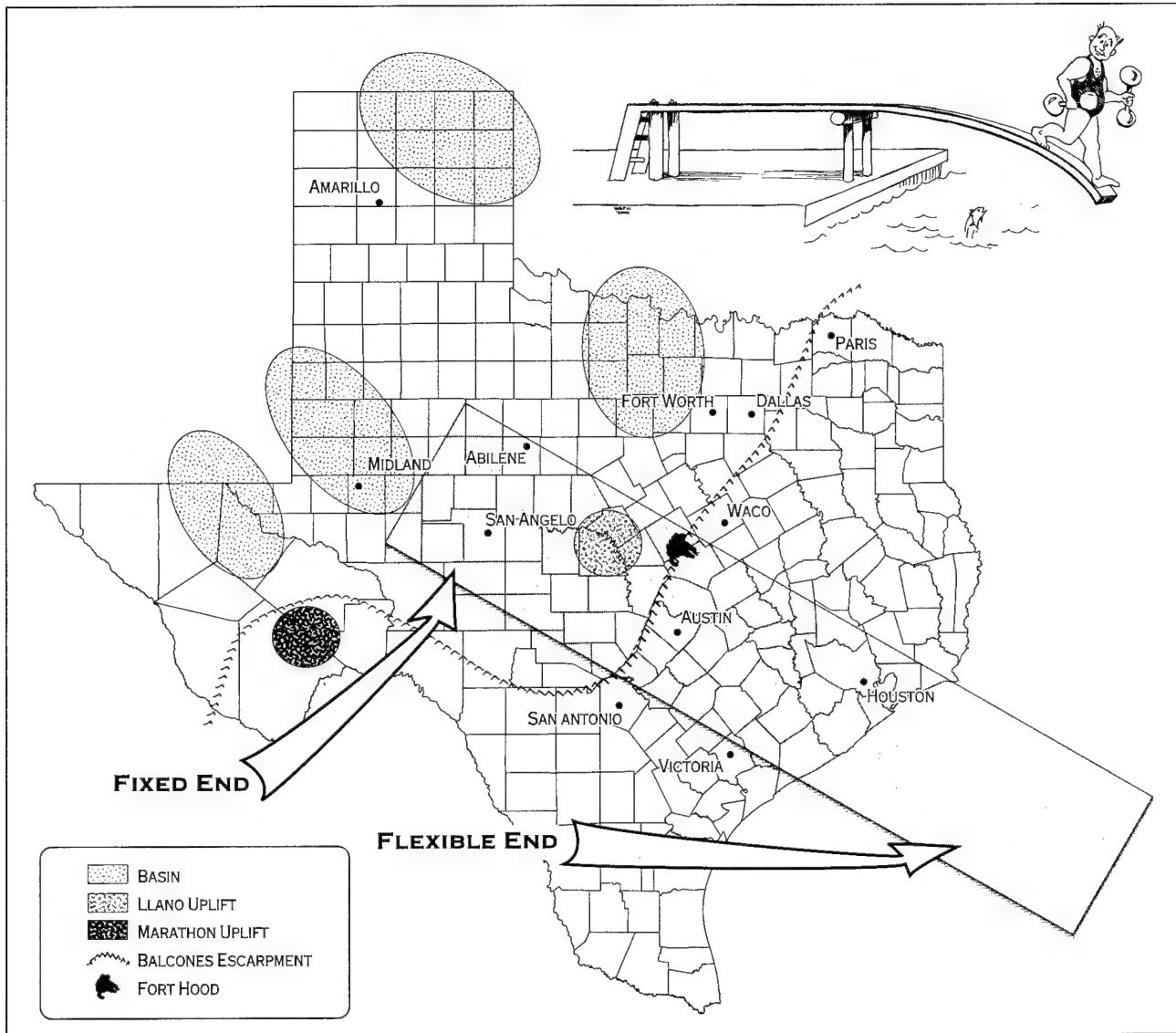


Blackland Prairie, a geological region renowned for its dark, fertile soil. While Blackland Prairie extends down into eastern Bell County, the western part of the county and most of Coryell County fall within the Lampasas Cut Plain. All of the Camp Hood lands (even the portion that hooks down into Bell County) embrace this distinctive subregion.

Topography was not originally a priority for the Army. But when one looks at the sweep of history contained within the boundaries of Camp Hood, topography ranks as the leading factor in the placement of roads, the establishment of farms, ranches, and communities, and the location of railroads. Therefore, it would seem appropriate to provide some basic information on the geological forces that shaped the Edwards Plateau, the Balcones Escarpment, and the Lampasas Cut Plain.<sup>12</sup>

The best way to begin is to set aside geological concepts and concentrate on visualizing a diving board. Now, the average person walking toward the end of the typical diving board can make it dip down about a foot. But send a weight lifter loaded with barbells toward the end and it bends precariously, sagging well before the man is halfway to the edge. If he's heavy enough, the board might even break before his toes curl over the end. But where will the board break? It won't break where he is standing; rather, the fracture will occur back several feet, near the chrome frame that holds the diving board in place. At that spot, the tension between holding the board flat and letting it bend is the greatest. Once it breaks, the tension is released and the bent section straightens out once more as the board, the weight lifter, and the barbells drop through the air on their way to the water. The dynamic process of tension and release is complete.

For the purposes of illustration, think of central Texas as a large diving board, a really long diving board. On a Texas map you may envision a long rectangle (as one might when viewing a diving board from above) with one end covering Abilene and the other covering Houston and stretching out over the Gulf of Mexico. This Texas-sized board has a short fixed end and a longer flexible end. The fixed end rests on some of the oldest rock in Texas—solid, fixed, immovable Precambrian rock that forms the foundation layer under parts of west Texas and all of the Edwards Plateau. The eastern boundary of this fixed end, the imaginary chrome bar that our diving board would bounce against when someone jumped off into the Gulf, lies directly (but deeply) below the Balcones Escarpment,<sup>13</sup> not far west of the capitol building in Austin.



While this boundary may form a straight line across our imaginary diving board, in reality, it follows the same curve as the Balcones Escarpment. As the line passes under the Lampasas Cut Plain, it turns northeast until it arrives at Paris, Texas, where it bends farther east, eventually entering southern Arkansas. Millions of years ago, this serpentine line marked the ancient coastline of the North American continent, meaning Texas was considerably smaller back then. And it was along that ancient Texas coastline that tectonic forces shoved the African continent into the North American continent. Or was it the other way around? In any case, the resulting slow motion collision gave rise to mountains and volcanoes that punched their way through the ancient Precambrian layer all along the line of contact. This collision completed the construction, as it were, of the chrome tower supporting our

Geological map illustrating the "diving board" effect from San Angelo to Houston over the Balcones Fault Zone.

diving board. The next step involved creating the diving board. For that, limestone was needed. Lots and lots of limestone.

Texas may be dry now, but long ago it was a water world. Throughout its earliest geological formation, Texas was the tag end of the continental shelf, inundated by an ocean stretching up the middle of the country all the way to Canada. The continental collision was one of the few times that Texas rose above the waters. Just as soon as the two continents separated, the land subsided and the waves returned, cutting the coastal mountains down to hillocks and burying them under a blanket of water and limestone. Limestone forms when decayed aquatic animals, shells, and tiny organisms drift to the ocean bottom. Those deposits, over time, undergo a chemical process that removes everything but calcium carbonate, the main component of limestone. Limestone varies in hardness. Some of it is dense enough to use for building tall buildings, while some of it is more like chalk. Most of the limestone covering central Texas today formed during the Cretaceous period (Cretaceous is Latin for chalk).<sup>14</sup> Water levels rose and fell every few million years, leaving behind limestone interspersed with layers of sand from ancient beaches, or mudstone from coastlines, covered over by more layers of limestone. Limestone smoothed the contours of the inner continent, covered the old volcanoes along the ancient coastline, and stretched out beyond that coastline into the ever-widening gulf that was created as the continents drifted apart. When the waters receded for the last time, the limestone formed a slab—a gently undulating, almost level slab that converted the state of Texas and much of the Southern Plains into a limestone parking lot, or in our analogy, a diving board.

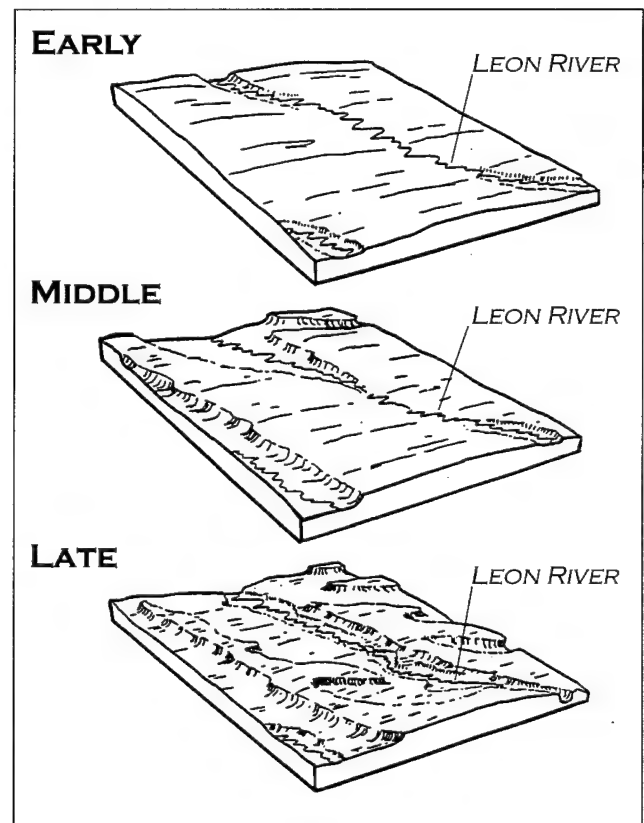
The portion of the diving board that stretched beyond the ancient coastline soon was covered with muddy sand and clay that was slowly filling the Gulf Basin. The limestone stretching into the Gulf Basin already had a noticeable sag, which grew progressively more pronounced as eons of mud piled upon its surface. Finally the slab could no longer hold the weight, and it cracked. Geologists are uncertain whether the crack was caused by the sagging limestone, or whether the center of the coastline, a region known as the Edwards Plateau, suddenly lifted. In either case, we can see the fractured edge of this diving board wherever we see the limestone hills of the Balcones Escarpment. The flexible end of our diving board lies buried under dark fertile sediments of the Blackland Prairie and other sediments of the Gulf Coastal Plain.

The diving board actually cracked in two places—once along the Balcones Escarpment and a second time along a line running parallel to the first, about

twenty miles to the east. The first section of this broken slab lies just a few feet below the surface. The University of Texas and the capitol building in Austin stand atop it, and Interstate 35 rides down the middle of it from San Antonio to Waco. The second piece covers almost half the state and dips abruptly downward toward the southern edge, with the far end extending well into the Gulf. Eons of accumulated coastal mud and sand have filled and leveled the depression formed when the slab broke, converting the ancient "S"-shaped coastline that followed the Balcones Escarpment into our now familiar "C"-shaped coast.

Where does the Lampasas Cut Plain fit into this diving board imagery? It forms the crucial zone behind the Balcones Escarpment, behind the chrome bar that separates the fixed end of the diving board from the flexible end. The same layers of limestone are present in the Lampasas Cut Plain as in the Escarpment, generally in the same sequence. Typically, the top layer in the Balcones Escarpment, called the Edwards layer, forms the stable ground surface over most of the Edwards Plateau. In contrast, large portions of the plateau were eroded away to form the rugged landscape of the Lampasas Cut Plain, characterized by isolated remnant mesas capped by the Edwards layer. We know what caused the crack in the diving board. The question now is, what put the cut in the Lampasas Cut Plain? For the answer to that, and other mysteries, we will have to leave Texas and head west.

Once, millions of years ago, the trip to the Pacific coast was all downhill. Geologists have even found traces of an old river bed that flowed northwest from Amarillo to central Nevada, where it emptied into the Pacific Ocean.<sup>15</sup> This all changed when the Atlantic formed, pushing the North American continent away from Europe. As the North American continental plate moved west, rocks, dirt, and sediment piled up along the western coast. The Pacific Ocean bottom, having no place to go, slid under the western coastline, raising that side of the North American plate. The uplift in the west met a similar uplift along the eastern coast (created by the formation of the Appalachians), forming a shallow valley across the middle of the United States,



Three stages of erosion that formed the Lampasas Cut Plain (adapted from Hayward et al. 1996).

through which the Mississippi River flows. North of the Red River, creeks and streams join to form a fan of rivers that converge on the Mississippi, then flow into the Gulf of Mexico. But most of the rivers in Texas descend from the uplands in west Texas across the midsection, arching toward the south and east, etching their own solitary paths to the Gulf. When those rivers and streams crossed the Lampasas Cut Plain, they cut deep grooves in the limestone caprock, or Edwards layer. In the western end of the Lampasas Cut Plain, water erosion made wide river valleys; in the eastern end, those valleys narrowed as the water sawed its way through deeper layers of limestone.

Three rivers slice away at the limestone caprock. From north to south, these are the Bosque, Leon, and Lampasas Rivers, the last giving its name to the entire region. The Leon River, longest of the three, transports rainwater from as far west as Eastland County, unloading its prairie-fed waters into the Little River, and thence the Brazos. Skirting the northern boundary of Fort Hood, the Leon runs diagonally, northwest to southeast, across four counties. Its principal tributary, Cowhouse Creek, makes the deepest and widest cuts through the heart of Camp Hood lands, supported by waters from Bee, House, Table Rock, and Bee House Creeks. Rainwater and floods continually widen the original valleys, undercutting the caprock, exposing layers of limestone, chalk, and sand, and washing out clay and silt.

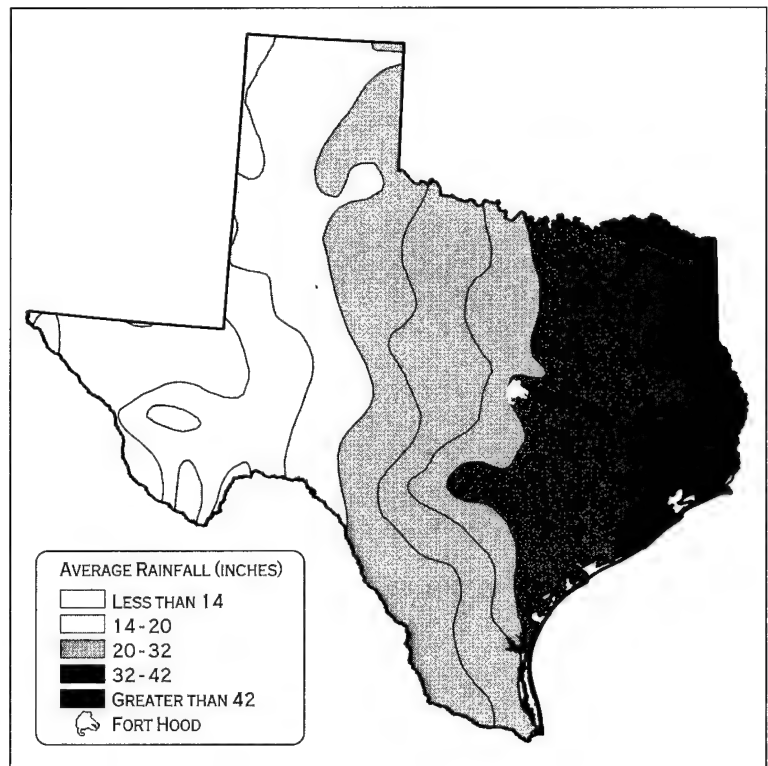
### **The Soils and Climate of the Lampasas Cut Plain**

The limestone hillocks create very little topsoil of their own. Most soil nutrients in the region accumulated over hundreds of years, carried from western grasslands and deposited along the streams and riverbeds, filling the bottomlands with arable, loamy, and slightly clayey soil. Arable and loamy, two terms that frequently appear in farm literature, make no claims on soil quality. Arable means loose dirt that is deep enough to accept a plow—about six to ten inches. In the Lampasas Cut Plain, arable often includes gravel-filled ground, strewn with hundreds of fist-sized rocks broken from the caprock. But at least it can be plowed. Loamy describes soil with a mixture of clay, sand, and humus, a combination that, in the right proportions, can offer good growing conditions. Humus is decayed organic material and enriches the soil with nutrients. Sand improves downward percolation of rain water. And clay, with its extremely fine granules, gives soil its stability and grip. Unfortunately, higher levels of clay and sand in the Cut Plain produce a powdery, gray dust when dry

and a dense, sticky mud when saturated with rain. Older creek beds (such as those along Cowhouse and Bee Creeks) with wide, flat soil platforms gave rise to humus-rich grasslands. But younger, narrower valleys often lost valuable topsoil when torrential rains stalled over the region, washing down the limestone caprock and scrubbing out the streambeds. Jacob de Cordova, an early Texas real estate promoter, recognized the soil's limitations. Unwilling to forego a large segment of his potential market, he put the best face on an unpromising situation. Assessing the well-watered region as "first rate," he crowed in 1858 that "these streams all have their hills and valleys, some very pretty ones for small farmers." Without explicitly mentioning the shortage of topsoil, he suggested that farmers "plough deep" as a way to reach the precious nutrients he felt sure lay just below the surface. A deep, subsoil plow, he noted, "would be best for this soil."<sup>16</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, deep plowing could hardly solve the problem. A survey of the Lampasas Cut Plain rates the soils as fair and in some places poor. Poor soils are found, as one might expect, on the uplands, the limestone hilltops where the thick caprock is lightly covered with grainy sand and chalk. Only the hardiest trees and scruffy grass take hold, depending on the sparse ground coverage. Soils rated as fair occur along the gentle valley slopes, where plowing is possible only with effort. The equipment must negotiate the average twenty-degree incline, and every few feet the blade will strike chunks of limestone or lumps of chalk from the intermediate layers that tumbled down the slopes and are buried in the soils. Even the bottomlands, filled with silt and humus carried by ancient floods, often are listed only as fair by the Department of Agriculture.

Be that as it may, one should understand that the Department's ratings are based on nationwide standards. Measured against the rich Blackland Prairie, or the dark fertile soils in southern Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, the loamy soils



Distribution of average annual precipitation in Texas (compiled from <ftp://ftp.tnris.state.tx.us/pub/GIS/hydrography/>).

in the Cut Plain valleys fall short of perfection. Moreover, these meager soils lie within a transitional climatic zone running vertically through the center of Texas where annual rainfall adds a degree of uncertainty. East of this zone, in the heart of the Blackland Prairie, annual rainfall provides more than enough water to grow a full spectrum of crops, even during drier-than-normal seasons. West of the zone, average rainfall drops below what is needed to sustain crops; west Texas farmers depend on irrigation supplied by deep wells. Within this transitional zone, farmlands sometimes receive good weather and plentiful rain, but other times suffer through drier conditions that wilt vulnerable crops. Growers in this transitional zone experience more and longer droughts than their fellow farmers to the east. This, coupled with the less-than-perfect soil conditions, makes farming the Lampasas Cut Plain a dicey proposition. Cotton, wheat, and garden crops provide good, if less than bounteous, yields when the weather cooperates. But because of the marginal soil quality, they remain vulnerable to abrupt changes or continuous excesses in weather conditions.

Ranching, on the other hand, has always fared better. Jacob de Cordova described the region as "very good stock-country."<sup>17</sup> Since the region lies along the wetter, eastern edge of the Texas ranch lands, the native grasses receive sufficient rainfall to grow during most years. Droughts must stretch on for several months before they affect grazing. Cattle, sheep, and goats can take advantage of terrain the farmer finds difficult. The stony slopes and tree-lined valleys provide good grazing in spring and protection from harsh winds in winter. Even the sporadic clumps of grass found on the poorest upland soils can provide some forage for ranch stock. Whereas farmers must depend on rainfall for their water, ranchers have easy access to the large number of streams and creeks that bisect every part of the region, providing a steady supply of fresh water for livestock even in dry years.

In short, the veins of river water that cut into the limestone capstone over the last million years create a thoroughly diverse area in which lands for farming and ranching lie side-by-side, interspersed like squares on a checkerboard. Though the trees are denser and the hillsides steeper in the east, and the valleys broader and the grasses more plentiful in the western sections, all sections of Fort Hood share the same basic mix of hard limestone-capped uplands, rocky slopes, and sandy bottomlands. They share the same wildflowers, grasses, and trees, and all the same problems when the weather refuses to cooperate.

It took years for the Army to fully appreciate the benefits of this diversity, but when they did, the variety of terrain and native vegetation made it the





Sunset on Cowhouse  
Creek (photography  
by Gemma  
Mehalchick).

best choice for a modern military training camp in Texas. Frank Mayborn was absolutely right, and General Donovan knew it. Testing tanks on the mushy, flat Blackland Prairie near Valley Mills would have made little practical or military sense, when the war we fought then and the battles we have fought since have called upon our soldiers to face every conceivable type of terrain, from broad plains to steep mountain passes, from jungles to deserts.

Topographical variation compressed into the same region impressed the Army; the diversity of farming and ranching sustained the inhabitants. But one aspect remained consistent: the tree-clad hills and grass-lined valleys of the Lampasas Cut Plain in spring were simply beautiful, the autumn colors delightful, the occasionally snow-laden woods in winter enchanting. This rocky, sandy ground gave the ranch hand and plowman headaches and worry, broke hearts in dry years, soaked dreams with floods, and tested the strongest will of those trying to wrest a living from its soil. But it could, at the same time, bless a morning with fog-filled valleys, and close a hard day with the sight of those hills at dusk. Early settlers commented on the wildflowers and the valleys, the beauty so like that of their homelands in Kentucky and Tennessee. Such beauty helped sustain folks through hard times and made their sacrifice during the war all the more poignant. Tucked away off the main highway in a little-known corner of Texas—diverse, difficult, and beautiful—this land, this special kind of place, left a lasting impression on all who lived there.



1528 Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca lands in Texas with survivors of Pánfilo de Narváez expedition

1542 Cabeza de Vaca publishes *La Relacion*

Hernando de Soto explores eastern reaches of the Arkansas River basin

Luis de Moscoso Alvarado reaches the Brazos River basin with survivors of the Hernando de Soto expedition

1685 René Robert Cavelier Sieur de La Salle establishes Fort Saint Louis for France on the Texas Gulf Coast

1689 Alonso de León camps inside Texas near Mission San Juan Bautista on the Rio Grande

1716 Domingo Ramón opens the first road from San Antonio to Nacogdoches passing through present-day Austin and Taylor

1718 Martín de Alarcón crosses the Brazos and Little Rivers

San Antonio founded

1757 Spanish Mission San Luis de las Amarillas and Presidio San Sabá founded on the San Saba River

1758 Comanche Indians destroy Mission San Luis de las Amarillas

1768 Spanish abandon Presidio San Sabá

# TRACING THE LAND PREHISTORY TO 1820

## 3

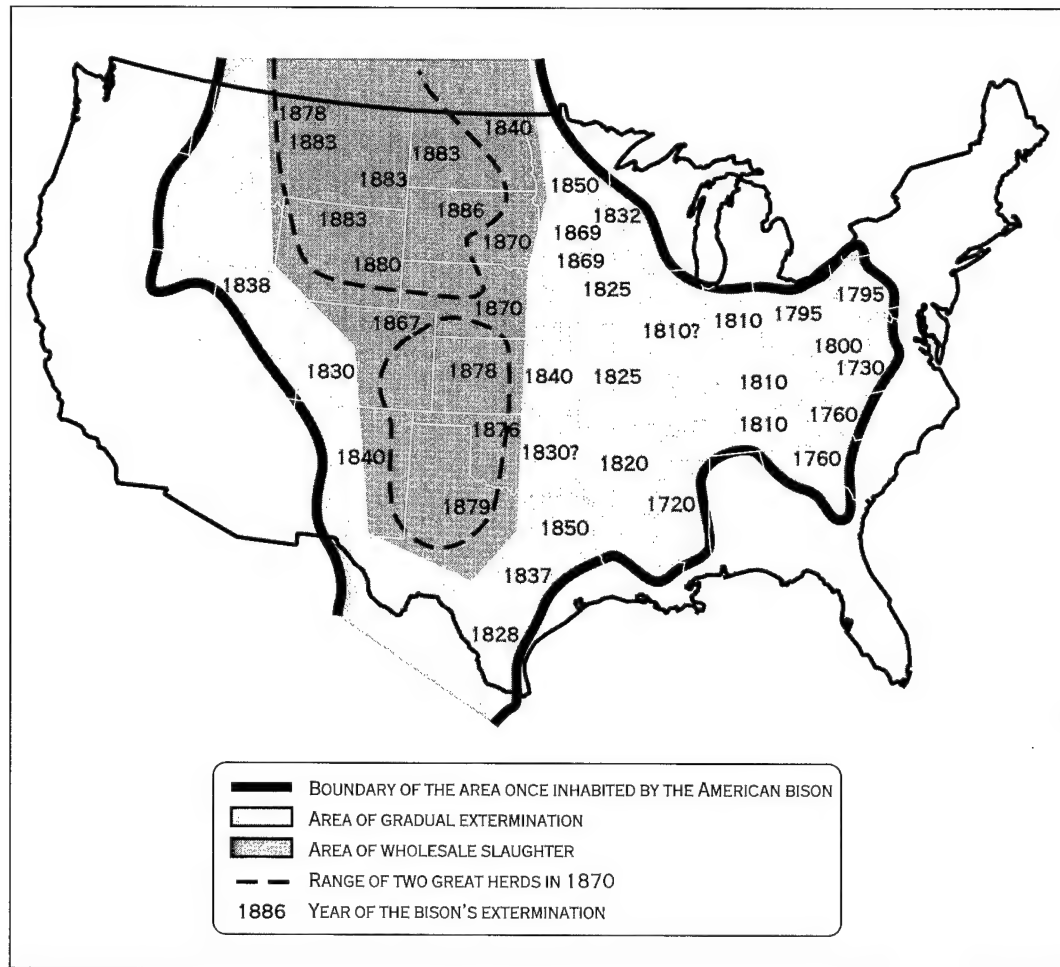
### Prehistoric Times

The surest path to understanding the early history of Camp Hood lands begins in the footsteps of the bison herds that roamed grasslands of the Southern Plains. Bison cut wide swaths through the Grand Prairie and winding trails through the Lampasas Cut Plain. Prehistoric Native American tribes tracked them on foot, and later tribes—Apache, Kiowa, Tonkawa, and Comanche—followed on horseback. Soldiers placed their forts along these buffalo trails to block the routes favored by tribes for their incursions through Texas into Mexico. Settlers built towns around those forts and cut new roads for their supply wagons. Railroad companies connected some of those early settlements and passed by others; some prospered, some faded away. Decades later, many of the same routes taken by buffalo, Indians, and soldiers would be covered in pavement by the Texas Highway Department (now the Texas Department of Transportation), preserving the pathways instinctively chosen by the earliest inhabitants. But whatever its end, the trail begins with bison.

*Bison bison* is the scientific name (genus and species) for the four-legged, dark brown, shaggy-headed, grass-eating animal that played such a crucial role in the life of Plains Indians. The French named the distinctive-looking animal “les boeuf” or beef, the same name given oxen and cattle. The English mashed “les boeuf” into “buffle,” and finally buffalo.<sup>1</sup> All the names referred to the same creature—the prince of the High Plains.

Archeologists have carbon-dated bison bones, tracing their evolution back millions of years from the icy tundra of northern Canada all the way to Florida. During the recent era, three types of bison roamed North America: the mountain bison in the Rockies and Pacific Coast states, the wood buffalo found in small herds in the eastern United States, and the Great Plains herds. As European settlement pushed westward, the herds of wood buffalo

Historical range of  
the American bison  
(adapted from  
Hornaday 1971).



declined to extinction. The mountain bison moved north or were killed off. Thus, the only surviving species of bison lived on the grasslands of the Great American Desert, the High Plains that stretch from Slave Lake in Canada down into Texas.<sup>2</sup>

In lieu of careful scientific study, one must rely upon the observations of explorers, hunters, and travelers for information about the Great Plains buffalo. Their testimony suggests that two large herds, one in Canada, Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, and North and South Dakota, and the other in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado, ranged throughout the Plains. While people once believed these herds migrated south in the winter, scientists now think that unlikely; rather, their cold-adapted fur permitted bison to roam wherever grass was plentiful, even in subzero weather, though they apparently avoided the flat, wind-driven plains in winter and the hot grasslands of Texas in summer. Otherwise, buffalo movements could be characterized as regionalized, continuous, irregular, and highly unpredictable.<sup>3</sup>

Paleoindian cultures that shared the Plains with the bison had the advantage of numbers. Buffalo were ubiquitous, with millions of bison in the larger herds and hundreds in the smaller ones; they gave Paleoindian inhabitants an easily available food, provided the hunters learned the secret to bringing the animal down. That secret lay in the bison's anxious herd instinct. "A wind-blown leaf, the bark of a prairie dog, or the passing shadow of a cloud could set a whole herd in headlong flight."<sup>4</sup> Sometimes their desperation sent an entire herd careening over a bluff or ravine, killing hundreds, even thousands, and filling the floor with carcasses (as Coronado's men observed in 1541), until the later arrivals could literally run across the backs of the dead.

Running buffalo over cliffs, or charging them up a box canyon then spearing them to death, were two common ways ancient inhabitants felled a delicious dinner of buffalo meat. While evidence of large-scale buffalo kills has not been found on the Lampasas Cut Plain, the valleys and ravines there would have been ideal. The earliest hunters used stone-tipped spears, perhaps flung with the help of an atlatl, a wood cradle that can greatly accelerate a thrown projectile.

Spear points made by the earliest inhabitants, first found around Clovis, New Mexico, are, not surprisingly, called Clovis points. These early points date to around 11,500 years ago, about the time the glaciers began to recede across North America.<sup>5</sup> For many years, archeologists assumed that the first Native Americans (those carrying the Clovis point spears) traveled from Asia across the Bering Straits of Alaska and down the northwest corridor into North America as soon as the glaciers began to clear. But there are two small problems with this theory. First, there is mounting evidence that Clovis peoples were not the first folks to enter the Americas. Recent and controversial finds suggest that a seafaring people may have traveled down the western coastline some 13,000 to 15,000 thousand years ago. The second problem is that no one has found any Clovis points in eastern Asia, where the Clovis peoples are supposed to have come from, while similar but older points have been found in Europe and in the eastern United States. This new information leads some scientists to believe that ancestors of Clovis peoples originated in Europe and entered North America along the eastern seaboard, perhaps by boat, long before they spread out onto the Great Plains.

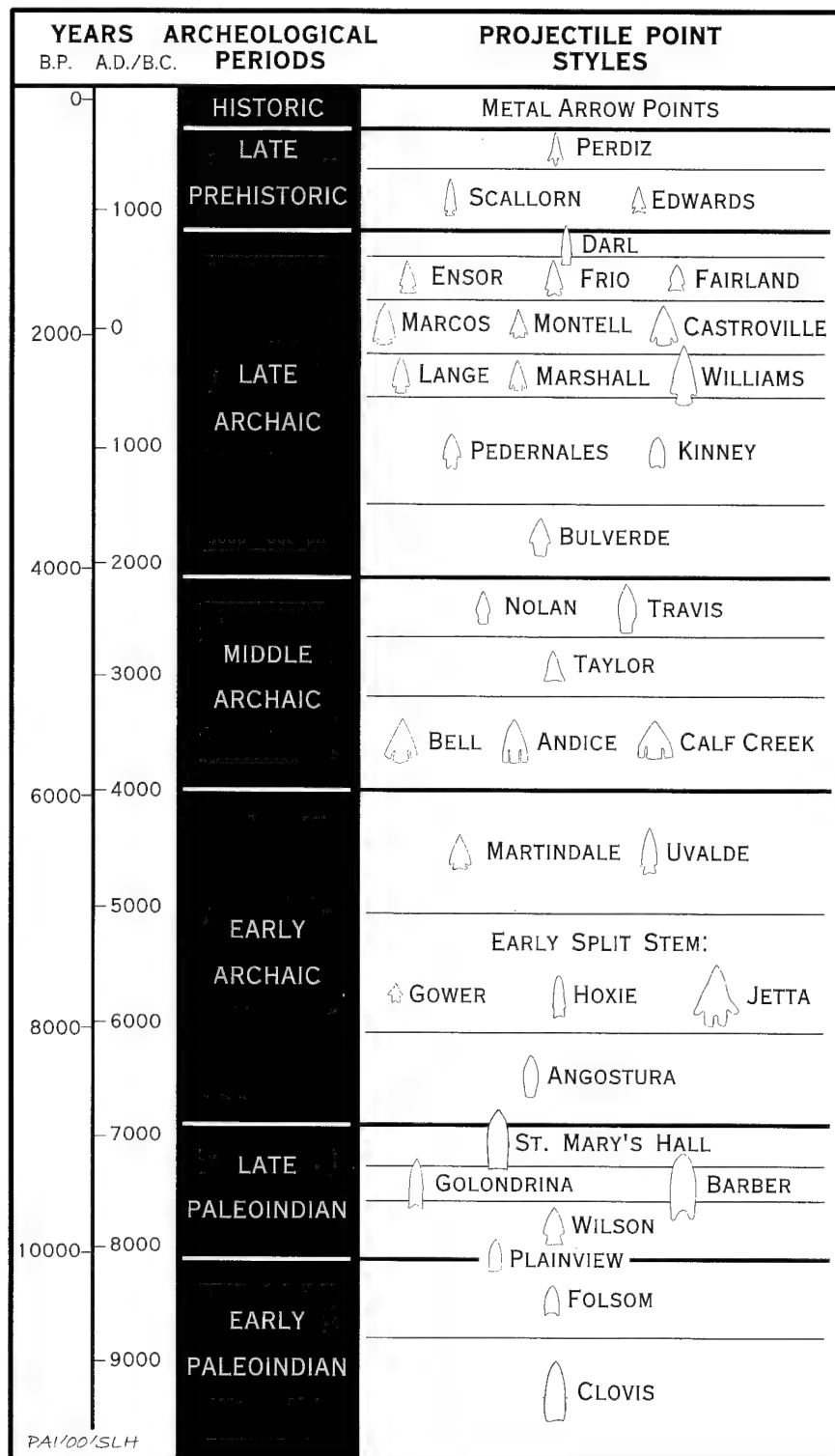
Regardless, all available evidence points to the Clovis peoples as the first to inhabit central Texas, the first of many different cultural groups to pass

Archeological periods  
and projectile point  
styles of central Texas.

though the area in the past twelve thousand years. Changes in human culture over many millennia are traceable from changes in stone tools, particularly spear and arrow points; remains of plants and animals people ate; and the strategies used for survival. Major shifts in the ways people lived

are linked to changes in climate, which impacted their environments and forced them to adapt to new conditions. Archeologists identify different prehistoric groups by the distinctive styles of projectile points they left behind, often named for the towns or rivers where they were first found. Such central Texas names as Andice, Bell, Castroville, Montell, Nolan, Pedernales, and Travis abound in the list of distinctive spear and arrow points common to the region. These and many other types of prehistoric artifacts are found in the rock shelters and river terrace campsites on and around Fort Hood. If sheer numbers of projectile points are any indication, central Texas and the Lampasas Cut Plain were favored places for prehistoric peoples to live.<sup>6</sup>

For most of the time that central Texas has been inhabited by humans, its peoples have lived a "hunter-gatherer" lifestyle. Early Paleoindians hunted animals now extinct,



such as mammoth and giant bison, and may have traveled over very wide territories. The Archaic peoples were somewhat more settled, moving from place to place within a specific region looking for the edible plants and animals available in each season. Archaic peoples camped in favorite locations, returning to them often enough to generate heaps of garbage—pits filled with burnt limestone rocks from cooking fires.

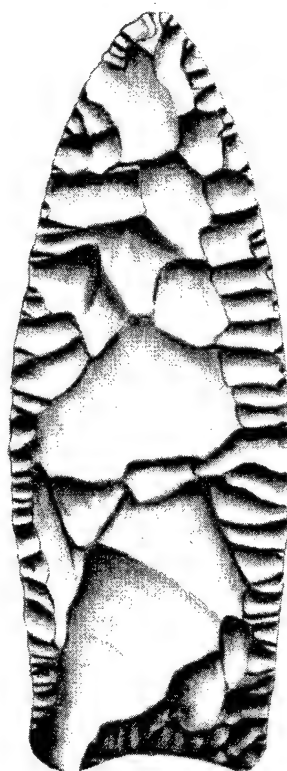
Gathering fruits, nuts, and berries provided much

of their food, but they also hunted large and small animals. Buffalo bones, as well as bones from deer and rabbits, have been found in ancient campsites. When buffalo were scarce, as they were for several thousand years, inhabitants relied on starchy plants. These were prepared by laying the plants in a hole along with burning wood and rocks, covering them with more rocks and dirt, and letting them cook slowly for several hours.<sup>7</sup>

Like many Native groups, central Texas Indians adopted the bow and arrow around two thousand years ago and pottery making sometime after that. During the Late Prehistoric period, one of the most recognizable cultures was the group that archeologists call Toyah. Using small Perdiz points, probably tipping the ends of cane arrow shafts, Toyah peoples ranged over all of central and south

Texas hunting buffalo. One intriguing question is why the central Texas Indians did not farm during the Late Prehistoric period, when other groups (such as the Caddo to the east) had adopted agriculture. Archeologists have found no convincing evidence that central Texas Indians ever planted or harvested crops.

Over many thousands of years, prehistoric groups split apart, migrated and resettled, and adapted as their surroundings changed. Precisely when and how the evolution from the earliest Paleoindians to modern Native American tribes occurred is a long and complex story that is still a matter of conjecture and debate. Regardless, it is clear that the Camp Hood lands were home to some of the state's earliest occupants and untold numbers of



CLOVIS SPEAR POINT  
CA. 10,000 B.C.



PERDIZ ARROW POINT  
CA. A.D. 1500

Clovis and Perdiz  
projectile points  
(adapted from Turner  
and Hester 1999).

Native American cultures since. Over 1,090 archeological sites containing evidence of prehistoric occupations have been identified on Fort Hood.

### **Historic Native Americans in Texas**

What little we know about Texas tribes in historic times derives from reports by survivors of Spanish expeditions into Texas in the early 1500s. One of the most significant of these reports, *La Relacion* (1542), comes from Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, who was among four survivors of the disastrous Narváez expedition.<sup>8</sup> After five years living as a slave and then intertribal merchant among coastal tribes in Texas, Cabeza de Vaca provided a careful description of the Karankawas, with whom he spent the largest number of years. On his westward journey home, he encountered the Jumanos living along the Rio Grande west of Big Bend. According to Cabeza de Vaca, the Jumano (or Humana) traveled north each autumn to hunt migrating herds of buffalo, and for this unique trait he called them the Cow People. Little else is known about their culture, and the name Jumano, like names given to many native peoples by different groups of newcomers at different times, has led to confusion more often than not.

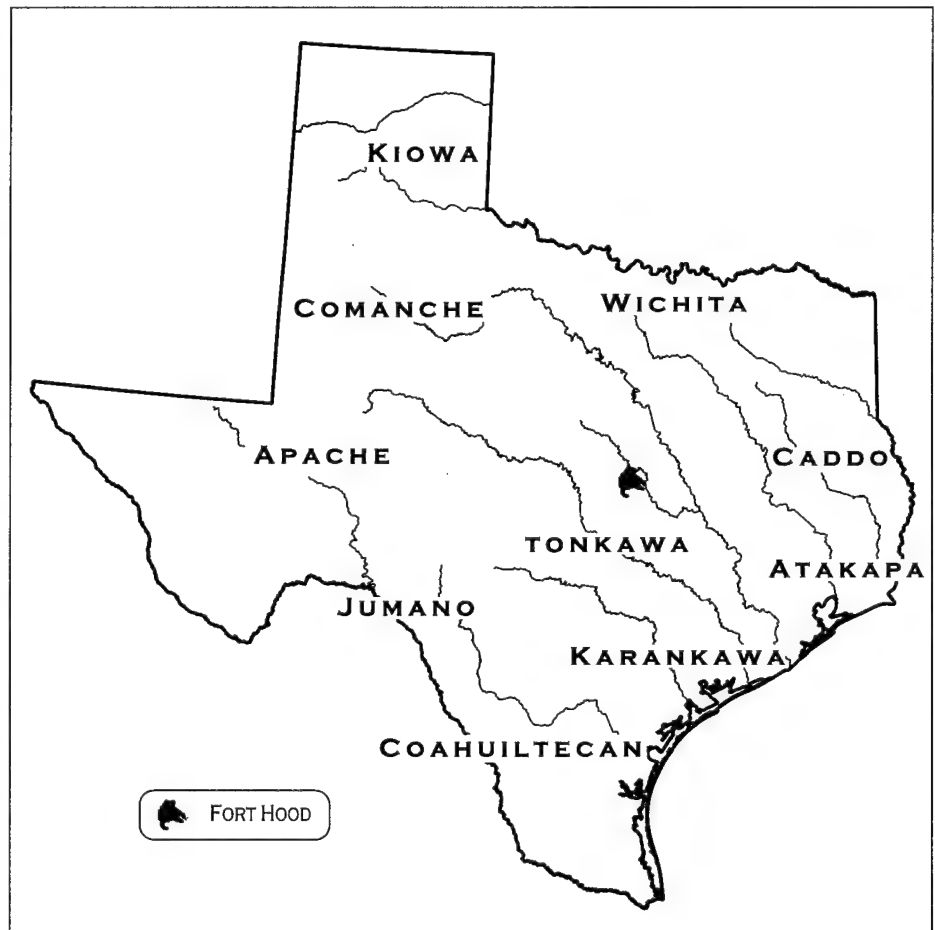
Three years after Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions returned to Mexico City, Hernando de Soto landed in Florida and spent the last two and a half years of his life wandering throughout the southern United States in search of gold and silver mines. In 1542, weak, tired, and hungry, the small group camped for the winter along the Mississippi River near its junction with the Arkansas River, where de Soto died. The directionless group followed de Soto's lieutenant, Luis de Moscoso Alvarado, as he searched for an overland route back to Mexico City, a path that took them across northern Louisiana and into Texas, where they encountered the Caddo Indians of east Texas. Moscoso, and subsequent Spanish visitors, considered the Caddo to be the most culturally advanced tribe.<sup>9</sup> The Caddo in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas shared linguistic traits with Pawnees in Oklahoma and Kichai tribes along the Sabine River. The Texas Caddo broke into two large groups, with several distinct tribes within each group. It is from the Caddo that the Spanish got the word *Tejas*, a greeting roughly translated as "friend."<sup>10</sup>

The same year de Soto reached the Mississippi, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado crossed the Texas Panhandle from northern New Mexico; he encountered enormous herds of buffalo on the Staked Plains, as numerous as

"the fish of the sea."<sup>11</sup> He also met two bands of Indians he labeled as Querechos and Tejas. Anthropologists have since identified the Querechos as a branch of the eastern Apaches that included Jicarilla, Lipan, Mescalero, and Kiowa Apaches. Linguists put the Apaches in the Athapaskan language group, which derives, curiously, from tribes living in the Pacific Northwest as far north as Alaska. How and when this group of Apaches broke away and headed southeast onto the open plains is a matter of some speculation. However, in the prehorse era, these eastern Apache tribes dominated the Plains, tracking buffalo herds on foot and hauling their supplies on long poles the French trappers called *travois*, tied to the backs of large domesticated dogs. The Apaches employed communal hunting techniques to surround and kill buffalo, sometimes by driving them over cliffs.<sup>12</sup>

A little farther north, Coronado came to the Arkansas River in Kansas, the same month de Soto was exploring the lower Arkansas, approaching it from the Mississippi side; at one point they were only three hundred miles apart, neither knowing about the other. While in the area, Coronado encountered Wichita tribes living as farmer/hunters—planting food in the summer and tracking buffalo

when they migrated south in the winter. Wichitas cultivated bountiful crops of corn, beans, and squash. Therefore, hunting, and later, raising horses, were less essential to their daily existence. Once horse-mounted Apaches, and then Comanches, invaded their fields, the Wichitas shifted operations south to the Red River, leaving their name on a group of mountains in southwestern



Native American groups encountered by Spanish and French expeditions in Texas, 1500–1700 (compiled from Newcomb 1961 and Stephens and Holmes 1989).



Oklahoma. One branch of the Wichitas, known as the Waco (or Huaco) Indians, moved as far south as the Falls of the Brazos in Texas. The City of Waco derives its name from these people.

These three explorers—Cabeza de Vaca, de Soto, and Coronado—cut the four corners of Texas in the 1540s, and in so doing identified most of the major Native American groups living in Texas prior to Spanish colonization. These were the Karankawas along the central coast, the Coahuiltecan in south Texas, the Jumanos in the Trans-Pecos region, the Apaches in west Texas and the Panhandle, and the Caddo in northeastern Texas. What they left unexplored was central Texas.

A tribal group not identified by these explorers was the Tonkawas, the tribe most closely identified with central Texas. Although there is no method to verify their precise movements over the centuries, it is safe to assume they were already ensconced in the rolling hills of the Edwards Plateau by the eighteenth century. As with other tribal groups identified by the Spanish, the Tonkawas represent a collective of tribes that, as the Waco term “Tonkawa” implies, “all stuck together.” Scholars have associated larger bands of Mayeye, Yojuane, and Ervipiame, as well as smaller groups of Cavas, Emets, Sanas, and Tohos, with the Tonkawas, but the nature of the relationships between these groups remains murky. By a process of elimination, some linguists believe Tonkawas may be a derivative branch from the amorphous collection of Coahuiltecan tribes. Like the Coahuiltecan to the south, Tonkawas practiced hunting and gathering without any supplemental cultivation.<sup>13</sup>

Little is known about the Tonkawas until 1690, when French explorer Alonzo de León established continuous European contact with them near present-day Victoria, Texas. The tribe had horses, but their continued reliance on dog sleds and *travois*, typical of prehorse northern Plains Indians, suggests to anthropologists like W. W. Newcomb that the Tonkawas adopted northern cultural hunting patterns. By the late 1600s, warfare and pressure from more-aggressive tribes had reduced the independent Tonkawan bands to a single group, more or less, whose territory centered between Lampasas and Llano. In the best of years it extended 150 miles in all directions, a circle bounded today by San Angelo, Fort Worth, Mexia, and Victoria. In the 1730s, Spanish missionaries called the consolidated Tonkawan tribes a “terrible and bellicose nation” that wielded its new-found power in warfare and robbery. When soldiers and settlers arrived at Fort Gates in 1849, they occupied the Tonkawan heartland.

In appearance, the Tonkawas were much like other tribes. Tonkawan men wore a long breechcloth and leather moccasins (and occasionally leggings), the women wore grass skirts, and children wore few if any clothes. Men and women adorned themselves with tattoos, earrings, and necklaces made of shells and bones, and both put decorative ornaments in their hair, which they parted in the middle and either braided or let hang loose across their shoulders. Tonkawan women sometimes cut their hair short, as did women in other Texas tribes. Had they a preference in homelands, Tonkawans would have hunted bison on the High Plains, where food was plentiful and easily obtained. But hunting buffalo exposed them to raids from other tribes, which their small numbers could ill afford. By the 1700s, the massive bison herds rarely came deep into the Texas hills, so the tribe fell back on hunting deer, along with rabbits, rats, and rattlesnakes. Unlike more-northern Plains tribes, Tonkawas were skilled fishermen who harvested the streams and rivers of central Texas and relished shellfish and mussels. And like the southern Coahuiltecan, they supplemented their diet with berries, fruits, nuts, and roots. Information about tribal organization, familial relationships, religious beliefs, and rituals is sketchy at best, and should be considered suspect when coming, as so much of it does, from members of neighboring tribes or white settlers who had infrequent contact.<sup>14</sup> W. W. Newcomb offers one of the better descriptions of Tonkawan culture in his book on the Indians of Texas.

One feature Newcomb noted about Tonkawans was their willingness to form close alliances with friendly tribes, and in some cases even meld with other tribes through intermarriage. This practice, observed by the Spanish in the early 1700s, became increasingly necessary as threats from more-aggressive tribes further reduced the Tonkawan warrior class. In the end, the tribe found its most powerful ally in Euro-American military leaders. In fact, Tonkawas proved the most reliable and eager guides the U.S. Army employed. Moreover, some Tonkawan chiefs took pride in the claim that they never shed a drop of white man's blood.

Comanches were friends to few and mortal enemies of most everyone living on the High Plains. The name Comanche is anglicized Spanish for *Komantcia*, a word borrowed from the Utes meaning "enemy." Historically and linguistically related to Northern Shoshones, the prehorse or proto-Comanches lived in the mountains of Wyoming and northern Colorado, hunting rabbit, deer, and other small game augmented with roots, berries, and edible plants. Sometime in the mid- to late 1600s the Comanches

encountered the horse, and over a period of years various tribes adopted the animal as their primary motive power. When horse-mounted Comanches moved south and east onto the southern High Plains in the early 1700s, they rearranged all preexisting relationships and alliances. The Apaches, who had roughed up the Wichitas in previous years, were themselves forced to retreat to the mountains of central New Mexico as Comanche territory expanded south. The southern branch of Comanches, known as Penetecas, squeezed the Tonkawas off the Texas plains in the 1780s, and out of the western Edwards Plateau and up against the Balcones Escarpment and the Lampasas Cut Plain by the 1830s. They attacked the Caddo, Cherokee, and any other tribe they encountered, excepting only the Kiowas, with whom they formed a lasting and formidable alliance. If any Jumanos still existed in the Big Bend area by the 1800s, they, too, undoubtedly were forced into exile, as Comanches and Kiowas crossed the Rio Grande between Eagle Pass and El Paso in their search for horses, and later, when buffalo became scarce, cattle.

More than a source of food for the Plains Indian tribes, buffalo represented a walking dry goods store. Plains Indians utilized every portion of the buffalo, including hides for clothing and shoes, bones for tools, horns and internal organs as containers, tails for brushes, etc. While the bow and arrow, and later the musket and rifle, may have been the weapon that felled the animal, the most devastating weapon was the horse. The horse eliminated the buffalo's primary defense, its ability to outrun its attackers. In prehorse days, a herd might escape an Indian encirclement, charge down its hunters, and run off across the hills. To be sure, the same herd might successfully elude one tribe only to wander into the path of another, bouncing between bands of Indian infantry all along its migration route. The horse-mounted hunter, however, could keep pace with the buffalo, even when it ran at top speed. Encircling buffalo on horseback, as opposed to running on foot, played to greater effect because the animals' poor visual processing left them confused and transfixed by the colors and sounds rapidly swirling around them.

In short, the introduction of the horse in the 1600s quickened the pace of life on the High Plains. It modernized production methods, and like all new technological advances, it lifted those who recognized the opportunities it presented and lowered those unable to exploit the advantages to the fullest. A tribe could camp by a well-watered stream and commute to its food source as needed, confident that if the herd moved, the horse-powered hunter could

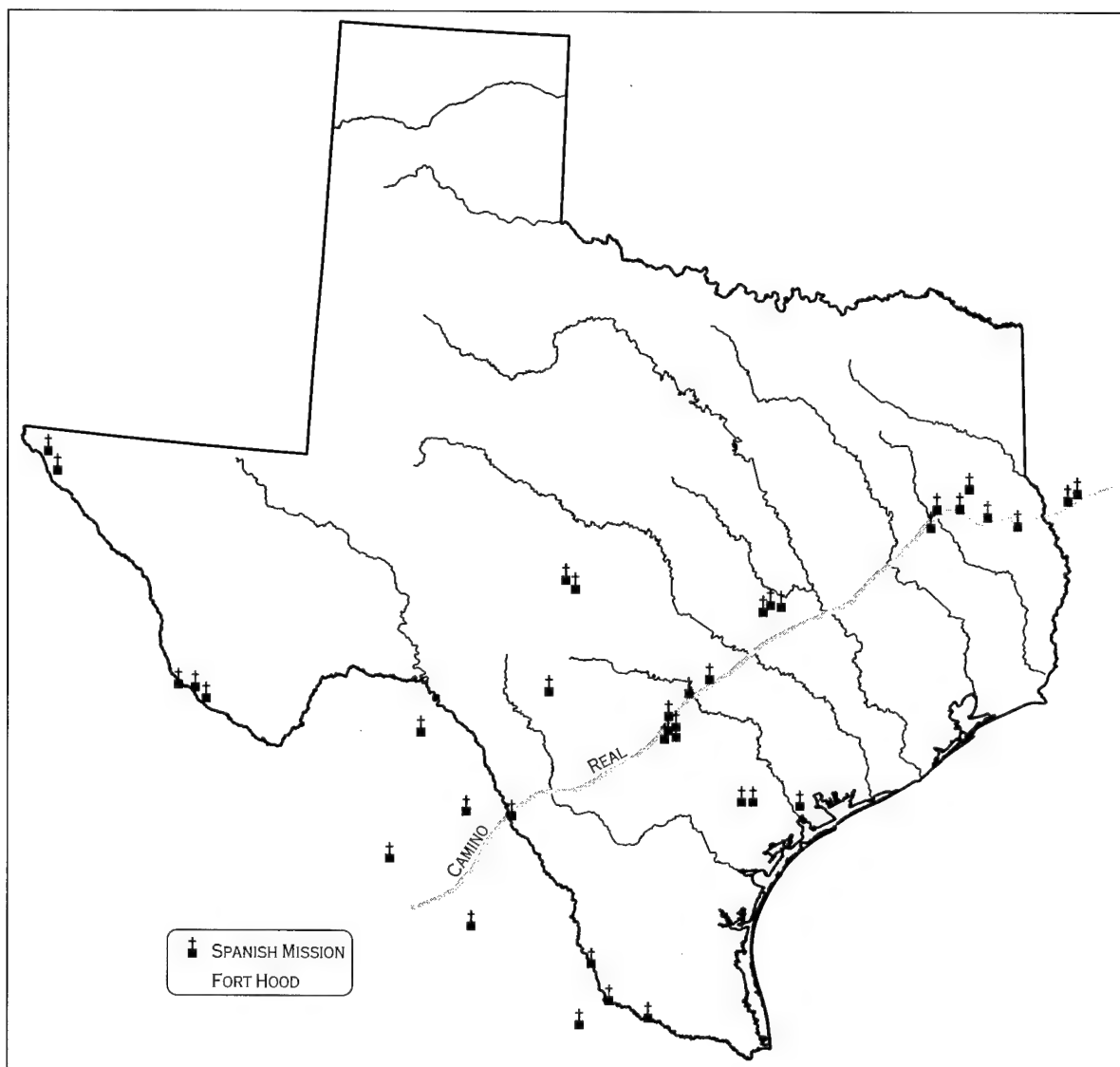
quickly locate it. Therefore, to follow one of the great buffalo herds unmolested by other tribes equated to laying claim to a silver mine or an oil field; it was security, health, and wealth for an entire tribe. Defense of that resource required diligence, courage, and the willingness to fight all challengers. And maintaining an adequate supply of fast horses to ride in the hunt assured continued success.

In hindsight, it seems clear that the relentless aggression ascribed to Comanches simply made them better buffalo hunters. The arrival of the horse offered them a chance to bid on the best food source available in all of the western United States, and they approached their assignment with steely determination. Within one century, they cleared all competitors from the southern Plains buffalo range, then held off intruders who dared to encroach on their territory. Like any good businessman, they sought to maximize their profits by controlling more of the raw materials, expanding their territorial claims to buffalo that ranged deep into Texas. And when their tools of the trade ran low, that is, when horses were injured or died, the Comanches replenished their stock by a low-cost method that promised the highest likelihood of success while inflicting the most damage on their enemy—they stole them. They acquired the best class of horse that others had already bred, fed, and raised to maturity, or else took them from those who employed similarly expedient methods.

In their pursuit of horse and buffalo, the Comanches possessed the where-withal, the natural ability, and the fierce inner drive to succeed where other tribes, such as the Tonkawas, Wichitas, and Apaches, had not. And only when the Comanches ran against the wall of white settlement and the resources of the U.S. Army did they finally encounter a competitor they could not overwhelm. Outnumbered and outgunned, the Comanches withstood a half century of fighting before the turf war finally came to an end. It is to the final competitor that this story now turns.

### **Spanish in Texas**

Spanish conquest of Mexico City and the establishment of New Spain formed the staging area from whence a slow but inevitable progress northward began. Fueled at first by the silver mines in Saltillo, then later by the expeditions of Oñate and others, settlers marched northward. In 1598, the Spanish established Santa Fe and Taos as the upper limit of a string of missions



Spanish missions in Texas (adapted from Stephens and Holmes 1989).

and presidios that stretched north from El Paso along the Rio Grande. Despite this early beginning, over a century and a half would elapse before the Spanish government considered settling the areas in Texas first explored by Cabeza de Vaca and de Soto.

The Spanish had enough on their hands managing the northern Indians of New Spain after the Pueblo uprising in 1680, but the presence of the French in what is today western Louisiana raised the specter of French incursions into Texas, forcing the Spanish to expand precisely when their inclination was to contract. Between 1690 and 1722, the Spanish built a series of missions and two presidios from the Neches River eastward into Louisiana, in the territory occupied by the Caddo Indians. Although these eventually failed, the supply route connecting the eastern outposts with Spanish forts along the Rio Grande soon became the favored pathway across Texas, known as the

Camino Real (King's Highway). The mission and presidial town of San Antonio was its most popular stop.

The closest the Spanish ever came to settling Camp Hood lands was in 1748 when Padre Dolores persuaded the viceroy of New Spain to authorize three missions along the San Gabriel River (near present-day Rockdale). Although the region lay in unexplored territory well beyond the Camino Real, Padre Dolores recognized that the location stood at the junction of the territories of three important Indian groups—the Tonkawa, Karankawa, and Atakapa. He believed tribes from each group might be persuaded to live in the same general area if they were given separate compounds. In 1748, Padre Dolores and his fellow missionaries supervised the construction of three missions. Mission San Francisco Xavier de Horcasitas served the Yojuane, Mayeye, and Ervipame of the Tonkawan group; Mission Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria ministered to Cocos and Carancaguas of the Karankawan group; and Mission San Ildefonso helped branches of the Atakapan group. Convincing different tribes to live peaceably along the same small stretch of river represented an extraordinary feat of diplomacy by Padre Dolores. During the first few months the experiment went smoothly enough, so smoothly the viceroy renewed his interest in the padre's little project, if only because he felt certain it would fail. Quite the contrary, an inspection tour by Captain José Músqiz in 1749, one year after the missions opened, counted over a hundred tribesmen at each location, with more coming each month.<sup>15</sup> To protect the growing number of mission Indians from the unconverted tribes in the area, a military council dispatched Don Felipe de Rábago y Terán to construct a presidio, or military fort, nearby.

A treacherous, egotistical martinet, Rábago disliked his new assignment from the start. Unappreciative of the diplomatic subtleties underlying the three missions, Rábago recommended that they should be consolidated into one large mission and moved to a strategically safer site on the Camino Real near the San Marcos River, a location squarely within Tonkawan territory. If that wasn't enough, Rábago scandalized the entire camp by forcing adulterous attention upon Señora Zevallos, the wife of one of the soldiers and the only Spanish woman in the camp. The distraught husband protested this outrage, and Rábago tossed the man in chains, then escorted his wife around the camp.<sup>16</sup> Juan Zevallos escaped from his jail cell and ran for sanctuary at the Mission Candelaria on Christmas Day, 1751. Rábago stormed the church with eight troopers and dragged poor Zevallos back to prison, violating the

tradition of safe sanctuary and infuriating the priests even more. But Rábago wasn't the only soldier to seek feminine company. When the priests learned that several soldiers had taken Indian women (neophytes and potential converts) as concubines, they excommunicated the lot of them. Both sides sent reports back to Mexico City in the spring of 1752. The viceroy sided with Rábago, but before his instructions to move the three missions arrived back at San Xavier, Juan Zevallos and Father Ganzábal were murdered by unknown assailants. The missionaries, Indians, and many of the soldiers fled the area. Hearing of this disaster, the governor recalled Rábago to Mexico City and installed Rábago's more-amiable brother in a futile attempt to repair the damage. Disease, drought, and famine closed out the last few years, and the missions were finally abandoned in 1755. Rábago's trial produced equivocal results, and without formal court-martial, he eventually was sent to replace Colonel Diego Ortiz Parrilla at the presidio on the San Saba River.

Mission San Sabá marked the second attempt at establishing a Spanish presence in the region, and its eventual demise squelched further adventures north of the Camino Real for several decades. It began when a small party of Lipan Apaches entered San Antonio in 1756, one year after the San Gabriel missions closed, and asked the padres if they might build a mission for them. The padres jumped at the opportunity to redeem the often-hostile Apaches. Six missionaries led several families deep into the Hill Country northwest of San Antonio (a hundred miles due west of Killeen), where together they built Mission San Cruz de San Sabá, unaware that tribal boundaries had moved, leaving their site just beyond Apache territory on land claimed by the Comanches. With the same degree of precaution employed at the San Gabriel missions, the military sent Colonel Parrilla to construct Presidio San Luis de las Amarillas a few miles away. That summer, the Apaches arrived in large numbers, camping outside the mission walls but never consenting to enter the compound. Frustrated with their lack of progress, three of the six missionaries returned to San Antonio a few months later. The others held out until the following spring, when rumors arrived of a Comanche incursion.<sup>17</sup> Despite repeated warnings by Colonel Parrilla, the missionaries refused to take shelter in the presidio, demonstrating the courage of their faith. Then, early one morning in March 1758, less than a year after the mission opened, several thousand Comanche warriors surrounded the mission compound (the Apaches having slipped away the day before), entered the gates under friendly pretense, and slaughtered many of the occupants.<sup>18</sup>

The mission never recovered, but the presidio hung on, first under Parrilla's command and then under Rábago, until 1768. The attack on San Sabá marked the high point in Comanche power. Over the next few years, the Apaches, who were never a major power in central Texas, retreated to New Mexico or were absorbed into other Spanish missions farther south. The Spanish, struggling to hold onto what they had, never again built a fort above the Camino Real. More than seventy-five years would pass before anyone would attempt it again, and those who crossed that line would build a nation.



- 1819    Panic of 1819; economic crash bankrupts Moses Austin
- 1821    Austin Colony Grant awarded to Moses Austin
- 1822    Texas Association of Nashville, Tennessee, established
- 1824    Law of Immigration passed by Mexico establishes empresario grants and rules for immigration into Texas
- 1825    Leftwich Grant approved in Saltillo; Sterling Clack Robertson explores Leftwich Grant
- 1827    Leftwich title exchange approved, grant enlarged
- 1830    Mexico bans immigration from the United States
- 1831    Austin and Williams Grants approved
- 1834    Immigration ban repealed
- 1835    General Martín Perfecto de Cos surrenders to Texans led by Ben Milam at San Antonio de B  xar
- 1836    Texas Declaration of Independence signed at Washington-on-the-Brazos (March 2)  
          Empresario grants eliminated
- 1836-1838    Trail of Tears in Oklahoma
- 1837    Panic of 1837
- 1840    Plum Creek Battle between settlers and retreating Comanches
- 1844    National Road connects Fort Towson to Dallas
- 1845    Texas enters the Union (December 29)
- 1846    General Zachary Taylor establishes Fort Brown on the north bank of the Rio Grande  
          President James K. Polk declares war on Mexico

# BOUNDARIES DRAWN AND CROSSED: 1820-1848

4

## Gone to Texas

**A**fter the Bank Panic of 1819 financially crushed Moses Austin, a once successful businessman and banker in the former Spanish colony of Missouri, he did an amazing thing. Unwilling to concede defeat, the indomitable Austin took a gamble on the biggest scheme yet. He rode eight hundred miles alone on horseback to San Antonio in the hope of convincing officials there to establish a Spanish empresario system in Texas. This was no small feat. The people had just thrown the Spanish out of their country and set up the new independent Republic of Mexico. The empresario system, which granted large blocks of land to people as a means of promoting immigration, had never been tried in Texas; in fact, no one had even considered the idea until Moses Austin rode into town in 1820. His trip set the wheels of history turning, leading to the creation of the Republic of Texas, and finally, by forcible acquisition, establishment of the present-day United States boundaries.

With the help of Baron de Bastrop, Austin argued before Mexican officials that the Spanish empresario system had worked well before, in Missouri and Louisiana; would bring much-needed immigration into an area that had been losing population ever since the Apaches swept aside more-peaceful tribes in the early 1700s; and would create an effective buffer against increasing Comanche raids into Mexico. General Arrendondo agreed, and on January 17, 1821, he made Moses Austin the first empresario in Texas. Unfortunately, Moses's trip back was so difficult that he died soon after arriving home. His son Stephen F. Austin took over his role.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Spanish system, an empresario received a land grant in exchange for settling colonists, allocating land to the new settlers, and making sure they followed national laws. Like the Spanish before them, the new Mexican government required colonists to relinquish American citizenship, promise loyalty, and convert to Catholicism. Religious conversion was merely a formality, however, since European immigrants held fast to their Protestant

traditions. Heads of families could acquire one league, or about forty-four hundred acres (almost seven square miles of land), for the same price paid for eighty acres of bottomland in Georgia or Alabama.<sup>2</sup> After the governor confirmed Stephen F. Austin in his father's position as empresario, Austin explored up and down the Camino Real, finally selecting land along the coastal plain between the Lavaca and Trinity Rivers just below the Camino Real. By 1824, members of Austin's Colony had received 272 titles, most of them along the banks of the Colorado and Brazos Rivers.

Word spread fast that the newly formed government of Mexico was issuing Spanish-style empresario contracts for territory west of Louisiana. A group of fifty men in Tennessee quickly formed the Texas Association of Nashville and dispatched their agents, Robert Leftwich and Andrew Erwin, to Mexico City in the spring of 1822 to apply for an empresario grant. But the rumors were premature. Austin's Colony derived from a special act of the Imperial Mexican government, and two years elapsed before the Republican government finally passed the Imperial Colonization Law that governed land grants in Texas. Undaunted, Leftwich stayed in the capital, lobbying for the Texas Association, and going so far as to spend his own money when the Association ran out of funds. When the administration offices moved to Saltillo, Leftwich followed. He finally received the long-awaited grant on April 15, 1825, made out in his own name. After he returned to Tennessee, Leftwich sold his grant to the Texas Association to reimburse his out-of-pocket expenses, plus an agent's fee, for a total of \$14,000. Association members were surprised, to say the least, but came up with the money.<sup>3</sup>

The Leftwich Grant, as it was later called, lay west of the Navasota River and encompassed much of the watershed of the middle reach of the Brazos River, starting with the Camino Real on the south and running north to an old trail known as the Comanche Trace. It was a big piece of land with one word making all the difference—watershed. Only twenty-five miles separate the Navasota River from the Brazos River, but when you include the Brazos watershed, the area is much larger, extending almost to the banks of the Colorado. And designating the Comanche Trace as a northern boundary set the upper limits along a line running from approximately Cleburne to Goldthwaite. The Leftwich Grant compared in size to the original Austin Colony, encompassing the greater part of the Lampasas, Little, and San Gabriel Rivers, along with Cowhouse Creek and most of the Leon River.

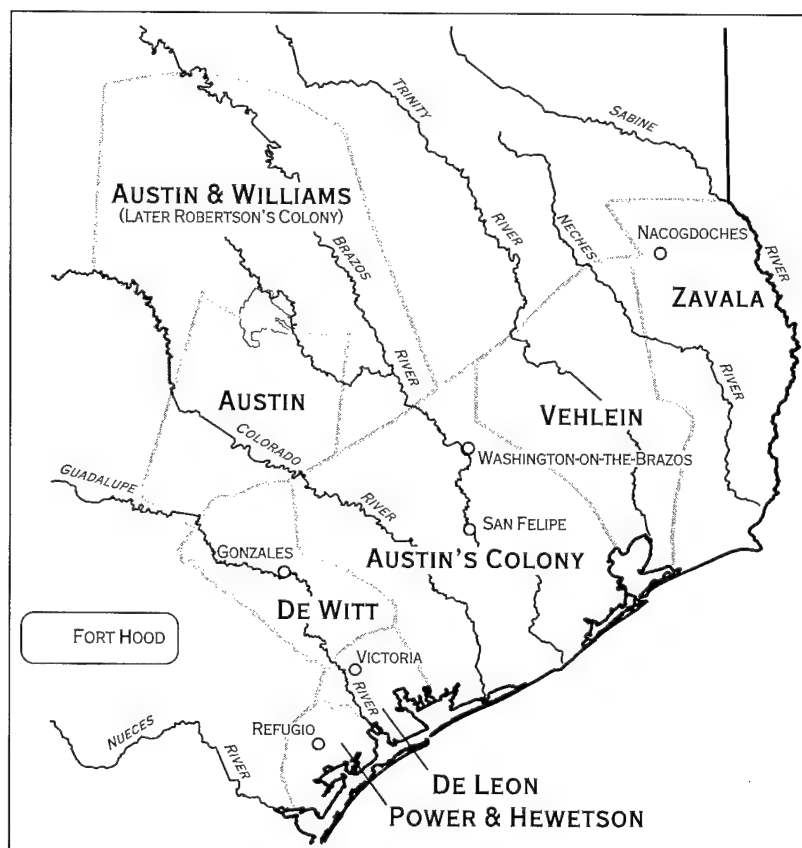
In the winter of 1825, Dr. Felix Robertson led thirty men, including his cousin Sterling Clack Robertson, on a reconnaissance mission to survey and map the Leftwich Grant and ratify the Leftwich-Texas Association exchange. Ill from his exertions, Leftwich stayed behind; he died shortly after the Robertson party returned in April. A second party, led by Benjamin Foster, departed in 1826, ostensibly to establish five homes on the grant. But they had no empresario credentials or proper paperwork, so the Mexicans turned the group back.<sup>4</sup> The following year, the Texas Association appointed Hosea League, a resident of Austin's Colony, as their new agent. They sent him the transfer agreement signed by Leftwich, the results of their survey, and an application for an extension of the settlement deadline. According to the 1824 Colonization Law, empresarios were required to settle at least a hundred families on their grant within six years (which in this case meant April 1831) or lose their contract. The Texas Association had watched five years and \$18,000 flitter away without settling a single family, and worse, without obtaining the legal right to act as empresario.<sup>5</sup> Hosea League forwarded their paperwork to Stephen F. Austin, who was in Saltillo. Under Austin's guidance, Mexican officials agreed, on October 27, 1827, to make League the empresario of the Leftwich Grant; they accepted the eighty-mile extension to the northern boundary (running along a line approximately from Weatherford to Brownwood), but refused to grant the deadline extension. The Texas Association had three and a half years to place one hundred families north of the San Antonio road or lose the contract they had paid so dearly to obtain.

By the end of 1828, the Texas Association, like a majority of the empresarios, had yet to place a single settler on their grant.<sup>6</sup> Earlier that summer, one member of the Texas Association wrote Austin asking permission to join his colony, claiming that other members of the Texas Association refused to call meetings and otherwise showed little interest in settling their grant, out of fear that all would profit equally from the few who dared show initiative. Unbeknownst to them, their time was about to run out. General Manuel de Mier y Terán had toured the Texas colonies that year and found the place teeming with colonists (almost four thousand in Austin's Colony alone), most from the southern United States. More were arriving every day, establishing farms and plantations along the lower Brazos, Guadalupe, and Trinity Rivers. Instead of preventing Comanche raids into Mexico as the system was originally intended, it looked as if the law was creating another Anglo,

cotton-raising, slave-owning, Protestant southern state in the heartland of Mexico's northern province. Mier y Terán's report so thoroughly alarmed Mexican leadership that they enacted a law on April 6, 1830, banning all future immigration from the United States. They denied any land titles not perfected by that date.<sup>7</sup>

As if awakened by an alarm bell, Sterling C. Robertson and Alexander Thomson suddenly realized in the summer of 1830 that they had better get some people on their Texas grant, and quick. They formed the Nashville Company as a subcompany of the Texas Association, then rounded up three other families willing to join them in a first settlement of the Leftwich Grant. When they arrived at Nacogdoches on the Texas border in November, Mexican soldiers asked for their passports, a requirement of the immigration ban. Robertson was unaccustomed to such treatment. Fifty years earlier, his grandfather General James Robertson had canoed down the Cumberland River to establish Nashville, Tennessee; President Andrew Jackson's wife was a family

Selected empresario grants and early settlements (adapted from Stephens and Holmes 1989).



friend and Robertson's uncle was president of the Texas Association. But his pedigree was of no interest to the border guards, so Robertson and Thomson agreed to leave their families behind at Nacogdoches while they went ahead to Austin's Colony to discuss business. Two days later, the men stealthily returned to Nacogdoches in the dead of night, spirited their wives and children out of town, and headed south. The Mexican Army issued an all-points bulletin to expel Robertson from Texas. Only after Austin interceded on their behalf were they allowed to stay.<sup>8</sup>

Robertson, Thomson, and the other members of the Texas Association were not alone in

turning to Austin. Empresarios across the state had flooded Austin with requests, urging him to go to Mexico City and plead their case. He finally relented, and

upon arriving in Saltillo in January 1831, found officials there unmoved by concerns of the Texas empresarios. They forthwith voided the Leftwich Grant and revoked the empresario agreement with the Texas Association. They even voided some of Austin's later, unsettled grants. In an effort to salvage a desperate situation, Austin and his attorney, Samuel M. Williams, applied for an entirely new grant, this time to settle foreign families—Mexicans, Germans, Swedes, whomever—on a vast package of land assembled from Austin's canceled grants and the old Leftwich Grant plus an additional extension to the north and west of that grant. Against all odds, Governor José María Viesca approved the Austin and Williams Grant in February 1831.<sup>9</sup>

Robertson was appalled. Instead of helping his Nashville Company obtain a new charter, Austin had used the opportunity to further enlarge his already enormous holdings. Austin tried to explain his difficulties—the French application for a Brazos settlement, the enmity Mexican officials held for Robertson after all his shenanigans, and the general fear in high places. Robertson would hear none of it and filed suit against Austin and Williams. Meanwhile, the Mexicans began a systematic clampdown on immigration from the United States. They established border guards along the most popular routes into Texas, such as the road through Nacogdoches; instituted rigid proof of identification and a system of passports; and imposed taxation on imports. As with the American colonists before them, taxation would, in a very short time, fuel a revolution. But more importantly for our story, the Mexican government built a small fort along the Brazos River just north of the Camino Real called Tenoxtitlan, its purpose to intercept unauthorized persons along the road and prevent settlements in the Leftwich Grant. Tenoxtitlan marked the first return of permanent settlements north of the Camino Real since the demise of the San Gabriel missions over seven decades before.

Meanwhile, the colonists held a convention in April 1833 (the second such gathering); they signed letters and petitions calling for, among other things, the elimination of import taxes, the separation of Texas from the state of Coahuila y Texas, and repeal of the immigration ban. Their first petition had been ignored, but they persuaded Austin to carry the second one to Mexico City himself. Once there, he lobbied the more-liberal and receptive government, headed by a remarkable new leader—Antonio López de Santa Anna. On December 5, 1833, Austin's patient efforts succeeded. Except for the call to separate from Coahuila, Santa Anna acceded to the colonists' demands, including a repeal of the immigration ban (effective May 1834). This repeal

cleared the way for a larger-than-ever wave of immigration to Coahuila y Texas. But on his way home, Austin was arrested in Saltillo on suspicion of inciting insurrection in Texas. He was hauled back to Mexico City, where he spent a year in prison, then another seven months under house arrest.

Meanwhile, Robertson feverishly worked to regain control of his grant. In April 1834, while Austin languished in jail, Robertson was able to bribe the governing body in San Felipe de Austin to accept a sworn testimony that he had, in truth, established one hundred families on his grant before the deadline.<sup>10</sup> Robertson hand carried the decision to the governor's palace in Saltillo. After reviewing the documents, including Robertson's letter vigorously denouncing Austin, Governor Vidaurri y Villasenor declared the Austin and Williams contract null and void and turned the grant over to Robertson and the Nashville Company. Thus, on May 22, 1834, the Austin and Williams tract, formerly the Leftwich Grant, became Robertson's Colony.<sup>11</sup>

Robertson also managed to get his own men appointed as land commissioner and surveyor for his colony. A few months later, commissioner William H. Steele and surveyor J. G. W. Pierson established the Robertson Colony land office at the Falls on the Brazos River, fifty miles north of Tenoxtitlan, near present-day Marlin. He called the town Sarahville de Viesca—Sarahville after his mother, Sarah Robertson, and Viesca after Agustin Viesca, the new governor of Coahuila y Texas (and, ironically, the brother of José María Viesca, the man who approved the Austin and Williams Grant).

The Tenoxtitlan fort had been abandoned in 1832, so the first group of surveyors for Robertson's Colony used it as their base of operations. A dozen miles farther north, a group of seventy-five families started Nashville-on-the-Brazos in 1834, considered the first official settlement in Robertson's Colony. The Nashville community built on a bluff overlooking the south bank of Little River where it flows into the Brazos. The river bottoms were "covered with a thick growth of heavy timber and dense underwood."<sup>12</sup>

The Brazos River soon became the water highway to the northern frontier. Settlers carved a new road along its west bank connecting villages in Austin's Colony (e.g., Washington-on-the-Brazos), with Tenoxtitlan, Nashville, and Sarahville, then continuing another thirty miles north to the Waco Indian villages. In 1835, some families—such as the Tylers, the Griffins, and the Chapmans—ventured up the Little River, settling in lonely outposts, vulnerable to Indian attacks and privation. Others ventured along the San Gabriel. The most adventurous of all, the Parkers, established their home on the

Navasota River, thirty miles northeast of Sarahville. No matter how many people arrived, land commissioner Steele wanted more.

As with any empresario, Robertson got his land grant (and Steele his percentage) as a fee at the rate of one league for every hundred families. Even if it violated the Mexican governor's specific instructions, Steele wanted to insure that Robertson received credit for as many loyal inhabitants as he could squeeze onto the land before the next deadline expired. As soon as he dropped his bags in Sarahville, Steele began canceling titles for colonists who settled during Austin's administration, while simultaneously signing up anyone who wanted a scrap of land, whether they brought their families or not, regardless of their character or affiliation to Robertson, heedless of their ability to farm. The governor called for an investigation into Steele's actions, and in May 1835, on the eve of the Texas Revolution, the state legislature of Coahuila y Texas returned Robertson's Colony to Austin's control once more, even with Austin still detained in Mexico City.

After letting his more-liberal vice president virtually run the country for several years, President Santa Anna resumed active control in April 1834, this time as leader of a conservative backlash. He dismissed the cabinet, dissolved Congress, forced the liberal faction into exile, and placed the federation of state governments under his strict centralized control. In 1835, the state of Coahuila dissolved into anarchy over the proposed movement of the capital from Saltillo to Monclova. Land speculators in Texas wanted to keep the capital in Saltillo, where they had influence, or better yet, move it to San Antonio. Some even held dreams of joining the states in northern Mexico into a confederacy run by Anglo-Texans. Comparatively, Robertson and Steele and the Nashville Company were small-time speculators. Most settlers preferred peaceful coexistence with Mexico. As one angry citizen wrote, "[the speculators] cry 'Wolf, wolf, condemnation, destruction, war, to arms, to arms! I have bought a few leagues of land....[I]f they don't bring the Governor to Bexar, I shall not be able to get my titles.' What a pity."<sup>13</sup>

Texas proved too rebellious for Santa Anna, so as he had done before in Coahuila, he dispatched a company of soldiers under his brother-in-law General Martín Perfecto de Cos to enforce control. A band of Texans led by Benjamin Milam attacked Cos at San Antonio on December 5, 1835. Milam died a few days before the Texas rebels put Cos in retreat. A week later, Robertson's long-time business partner, Alexander Thomson, asked the governing Council of Texas to honor the sacrifice of this brave Texan by



changing the name of Sarahville to Milam, and Robertson's Colony to the Municipality of Milam.<sup>14</sup> Having already suspended all empresario contracts, the Council approved the name change on December 29, 1835.

With Cos headed back to Mexico, the victorious Texans left San Antonio's defense to a group of newcomers who had come to Texas in response to Austin's call to arms. They very shortly found themselves abandoned by the original settlers, isolated in a small church that went by the moniker "Alamo," and surrounded by thousands of Mexican soldiers under Santa Anna's personal command. The rest, as they say, is history. The fall of the Alamo on March 6, 1836, and the defeat of Fannin's troops near Goliad on March 19 brought widespread panic to frontier settlements. People living along the Brazos River and its tributaries packed up their belongings, and in the pouring rain, slogged their way toward the Louisiana border. By the time they reached the Trinity River, word arrived that on April 21, Sam Houston had won a decisive victory over Santa Anna at San Jacinto.<sup>15</sup>

Victory at the Battle of San Jacinto near present-day Houston, would, in time, denote the independence of Texas from Mexico. But this was far from certain at the time. The Mexican government never formally declared an end to hostilities, and the status of Texas remained an open question for years. In fact, the exact boundary was not settled until after the Mexican War in 1848. All that aside, representatives sent to Washington-on-the-Brazos acted as if Texas was independent. They asked France, Britain, and the United States for recognition as a sovereign republic, and after much persuasion, got it. They held elections for president, established a bureaucratic organization, and went about the business of nation building.

Although growing at a record pace, the Texas Republic needed more settlers—thousands more—before it could generate enough taxable imports to sustain a government, one that controlled land from Santa Fe to Nacogdoches, from the Red River to the Gulf. The new government turned to the same ubiquitous resource Spain and Mexico had traded with such zest, the major resource Texas had in abundance—land. Legislation passed in December 1836 declared that empresario contracts (suspended since November 1835) had been officially terminated when Texas declared its independence on March 2, 1836. The long-running battle between Robertson and Austin might have been legally dead, but the perfection of titles, rights, and property lines would burden the new courts for years to come. Henceforth, the government of Texas would be the only purveyor of land grants.

### **Land Grants and Immigration**

As with the empresario grants before them, the largest grants in Texas went to heads of households who brought their wives and children. Single men received a good portion of land, but usually about a third of that offered a family. Another factor determining the size of a grant was the date of issuance. The earliest grants, known as first-class headrights, were the largest and had the fewest restrictions, a policy meant to stimulate word-of-mouth interest in Texas and reward the loyalty of early settlers. Gone were the days when empresarios distributed two and three leagues to a family, or (as in the case with Jared Groce) ten leagues to a single person.<sup>16</sup> First-class headrights entitled a family to one league plus one labor, about seven square miles of land (4,605.5 total acres), provided they had arrived before Texas declared independence on March 2, 1836. If they arrived during or immediately following the war (up to October 1, 1837), they received a second-class headright of two square miles of land (1,280 acres). Third-class headrights (640 acres) went to families who arrived between October 1, 1837, and January 1, 1840.

Former soldiers of the Texas Revolution could receive a variety of land grants. A soldier who served during the entire conflict could receive a maximum of 1,280 acres, known as a bounty grant. Donation grants of 640 acres went to participants in specific battles. Land grants were also issued for military service during specific periods of time, regardless of whether a soldier had engaged in battle. Soldiers who guarded the frontier between 1838 and 1842 received bounty grants of 240 acres. Military headrights (one league) went to soldiers who arrived in Texas between March 2 and August 1, 1836.

Headright certificates, along with certificates from bounty and donation grants, were distributed to pay debts and encourage business ventures and settlement; as such, they took the place of hard coin, each document achieving a value set by the marketplace. Indeed, Texas land certificates often changed hands several times before anyone thought to lay claim to the land itself. To actually claim the acreage designated, a holder had to select an area of unclaimed territory. It had to be located by a professional, registered surveyor who staked out the land and made exact notes as to its location. Then the surveyor's notes and drawings had to be reviewed and approved by the General Land Office. Once that was done, the Land Office issued a document called a patent. The patent formally transferred ownership of the land to a private entity.

A patent describes a land transfer from state control to private ownership; thereafter, if the property is sold, the transfer is recorded as a deed. Each document—certificate, survey, patent, and deed—chronicles the step-by-step transition to private ownership and beyond; the headright gives the holder the rights to a fixed number of acres, the survey pinpoints the precise location, the patent converts it to private property, and the deed divides and distributes or combines land again and again into a thousand patterns on a map. But not one of these documents tells when a particular piece of land was finally settled, or who farmed it first.

Surveys, patents, and deed transactions reveal commercial interest in land—land as paper. Throughout the 1830s–1860s, the paper trail of Texas often enjoyed a more vigorous existence along the Hudson River than the Brazos, as certificates passed among East Coast speculators, investors, and bankers, while the ground itself lay untouched. Even after a certificate was converted into a patent, years could pass in which the only people to have seen the land were the surveyor and his assistants. Yet, by tabulating the annual number of surveys, patents, and deed transactions within a particular area, one can sense the approaching tide of settlers.

Because paper ownership says nothing about actual land use, numerical analysis of real estate transactions can show only the relative increase or decrease in the number of transactions from year to year. Such information, while vague about actual settlement, gives valuable insight into trends, especially trends during the years between U.S. censuses, when other information is hard to come by. The first survey or patent in an area denotes the earliest spark of interest and tells who was willing to take a chance, if only a speculative chance, on the region's long-term potential. An early increase in surveys, without patents, implies that a land office has opened nearby, or can suggest heightened appeal of the general area, but little else. An increase in patents might suggest, but not guarantee, a greater willingness to settle the area, whereas a decrease in patents hints at special problems, such as Indian depredations, drought, or financial depression. Likewise, in later years, an increase in deed transactions could indicate when times were very good or very bad.

An increase in transactions can also result from a burst of immigration—as it did in the late 1830s—set off by Austin's call to arms, the victory at San Jacinto, and word of Texas land grants. As long as new immigrants stayed below the Camino Real and east of the Colorado River, the Comanches con-

tented themselves with pressing their southern expansion along the Rio Grande, at the expense of small Mexican communities lying in an area known as the Nueces Strip. But with the rapid and continued growth in Robertson's Colony and other regions north of the Camino Real, white settlements pushed into territory claimed by more-aggressive tribes—the Caddo, Towakonis (not to be confused with the peaceable Tonkawa), and Comanches. A month after Houston's great victory over Santa Anna, the Comanches swept down on Fort Parker, killing four men and a boy and capturing two women and three children, among them the future mother—Cynthia Ann Parker—of one of their greatest chiefs, Quanah Parker.

### **Surveys and Settlements During the Republic**

When Texans informed General Edmund Pendleton Gaines, commander of the southwest military division of the United States, that Caddo warriors from his district in the United States had attacked frontier settlements, he wrote back in June 1836, denying any knowledge and suggesting that the Texans should build a few more block houses for their own protection. President Houston took his advice. He called up two companies of Texas Rangers, offered to pay them in land if they furnished their own equipment, and set them to the task.

George Erath was a most unlikely man for the job. Born in Austria in 1813, Erath had attended the Polytechnical Institute in Vienna in the 1830s, around the time noted pianist Frederick Chopin arrived in that great city. Erath left behind the luxuries of cosmopolitan Vienna for rustic life in Texas, where he worked for a time as a tanner and salt distiller before landing a job as chain man on a surveying team in Tenoxtitlan in 1834. Over the next several years, Erath thoroughly explored the Brazos River basin, including the Little and Leon Rivers. In 1836, Erath joined Thomas Barron's company of Texas Rangers at Milam. With his experience as a surveyor, he was the logical choice to pick the best location for a fort.

Erath selected a spot east of the Leon River a mile above where it joins the Little River. The Little River Fort, as it was first called, consisted of a block house and stockade protecting seven or eight log cabins. Erath and his men laid out a road from Milam to Hornsby Bend (named for the great-grandfather of baseball legend Rogers Hornsby), a few miles downriver from the future capital at Austin. This road connected the communities spreading northward

along the Brazos River with more-southern communities along the Balcones Escarpment, such as Bastrop and San Marcos—communities that received their supplies along the Camino Real and their military support from San Antonio. The Little River Fort sought to give protection at a key river crossing along the road from Milam to Hornsby Bend, but Indian attacks made the settlement's prospects as chancy as anything else on the frontier. Indeed its various names—Smith's Fort, the Block House, and Fort Griffin—reflect a decades-long cycle of occupation and abandonment. This first settlement in what would later become Bell County could just have easily been called Erath, because the town's founder was rapidly becoming the major figure in the region. But even George Erath could not solve the one problem that kept the little settlement from advancing outside the stockade—Indian attacks.

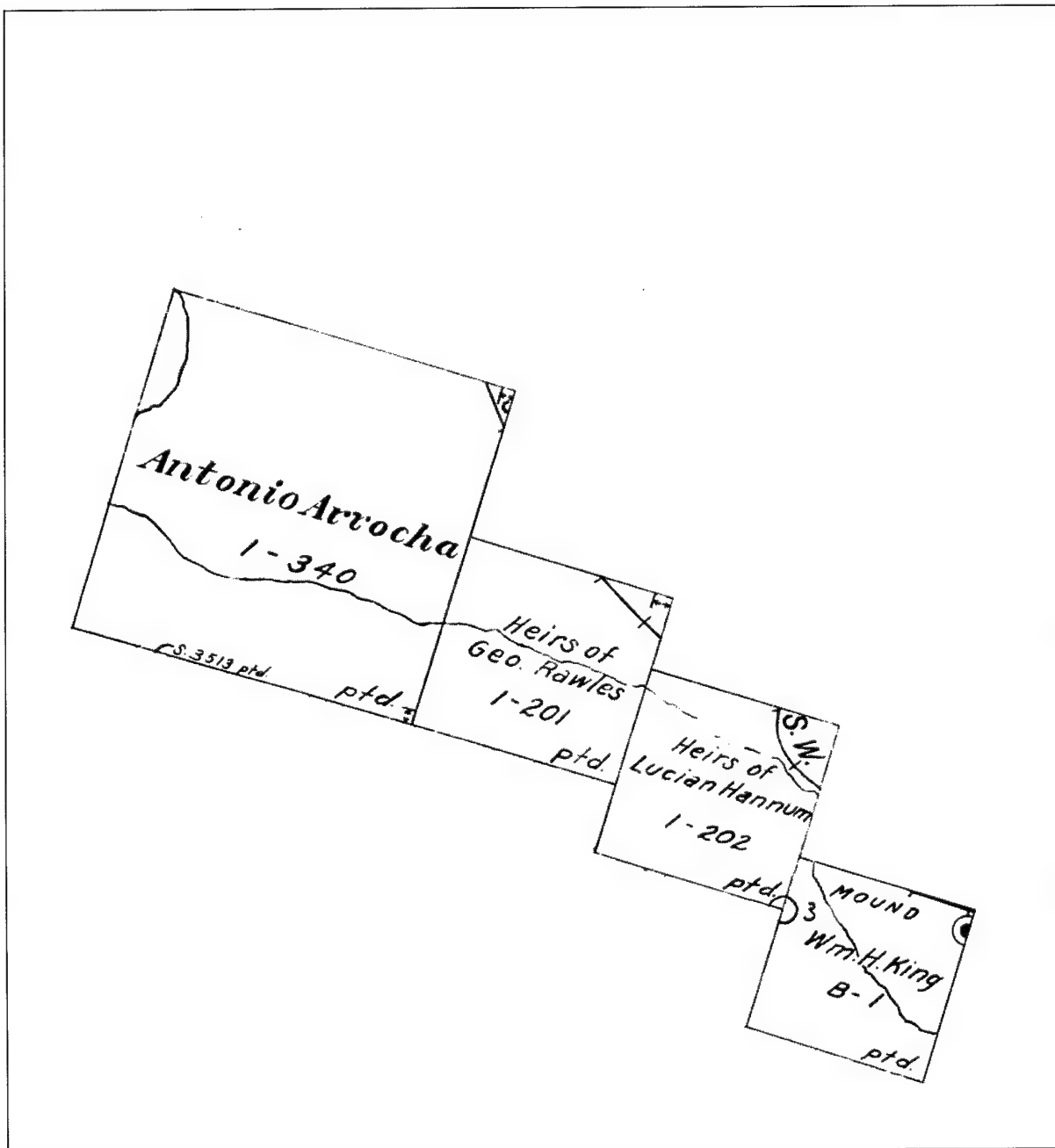
Although a peaceable tribe of Tonkawas lived in the area, one never knew where an attack might come, or from which tribe. One story from 1837 illustrates this point. According to survivors, a group of off-duty Rangers from Barron's company went looking for a bee tree said to be a half mile from Milam. The young men soon found the tree, cut down the honey-laden limb, and were sitting and talking when a dozen Caddo Indians attacked. If not more belligerent than other tribes, Caddos were at least more lethal because they carried the latest guns, bought in the United States. One of the Rangers, still recovering from an extended illness, lacked the energy to flee the scene. Standing up, he faced his attackers and got off one shot just as three Caddos fired on him. He fell against some bushes, and the Indians pulled him out and scalped him.<sup>17</sup>

The young man, dead at thirty-six, was James Coryell. The year before he had worked as a chain man with a survey party led by Luther T. Parchin as they demarked the one-fourth league he had selected for his future farm along a creek valley five miles north of the Leon River.<sup>18</sup> Coryell's untimely death conferred his name upon the creek and the valley he had explored. But in the years that followed, his death assumed somewhat mythic proportions. Most people believed Coryell met his tragic demise while surveying with George Erath. Coryell may have accompanied Erath when he established the Little River Fort, or helped Erath on an earlier survey, but when he surveyed what came to be known as Coryell Creek, Erath was not there, nor was he present the day Coryell died.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the Coryell-Erath connection, no matter how limited, was enough to assure that the county Erath did so much to establish and protect would instead be named for a little-known surveyor's assistant and private in a Ranger company, James Coryell.

Increased Indian attacks in 1837 led settlers at Milam to abandon the town and retreat to safer territory farther south. All along the Little, Lampasas, and Brazos Rivers, homes and settlements abandoned during the Runaway Scrape in 1836 remained empty, as reports of increased Indian attacks persuaded pioneers that it was best to stay away. Those who stayed behind did their best to arm and protect themselves, and Ranger companies and militia fought several notable skirmishes with Indian parties.

In 1837, President Houston signed a bill that reduced the size of the Municipality of Milam by a third. The legislation combined land from the

Modern map from the General Land Office showing four early surveys in the Camp Hood area.



Municipalities of Milam and Nacogdoches, joining everything between the banks of the Brazos and Trinity Rivers and north of the Camino Real into a new county, called Robertson County. The Municipality of Milam became the District of Milam, out of which would come Bell and Coryell Counties, and all the surrounding counties—Comanche, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Williamson, Falls, Bosque, and McLennan. In the same session, the legislature put a battalion of mounted soldiers in the field under the command of Major General George Bonnell. Throughout the rest of 1838 and the early months of 1839, this battalion assisted the Milam Guards in patrolling the Brazos, Little, and San Gabriel Rivers. Despite frequent alarms, no one died and little was stolen. During this respite, surveyors were able to locate four parcels along the northeast edge of what would become Camp Hood, slightly southeast of the future position of Fort Gates and straddling the Leon River. Three of these four surveys were first-class headrights (the Antonio Arrocha, George Rawles, and Lucian Hannum Surveys), and one was a bounty grant (William H. King Survey). None of the new owners occupied their land.

Indian attacks throughout central Texas resumed in late 1839, with a significant fight taking place near Bird's Creek, south of present-day Temple. Despite the attacks, over the next six years towns and settlements increased in number, most keeping to land along the major rivers, especially the Brazos. Headrights and military grants produced a flood of immigrants to Texas, swelling the population from 30,000 to 140,000 people. But as long as Indian attacks persisted, most stayed below the Camino Real.<sup>20</sup>

In an effort to encourage frontier settlement instead of speculation, the Republic of Texas under President Mirabeau B. Lamar added a stipulation to the fourth and final class of headrights issued to those who arrived between January 1, 1840, and January 12, 1842. While offering the same quantity of land as third-class headrights, fourth-class headrights also required the holder to cultivate 10 acres to gain clear title. In addition, the Republic created the preemption grant, giving special rights to settlers brave enough to venture outside Austin's original colony (where most immigrants settled), beyond the Camino Real and out into the wild frontier. Such intrepid souls could, if they stayed in an area long enough, apply for and receive title to 160 acres. Warm bodies willing to face the Comanche threat took precedence, but the government found few takers. While the Republic needed more settlers and fewer speculators, the settlers needed more soldiers and less fear.

In February 1845, the U.S. Congress approved a joint resolution to annex the Republic of Texas. The Republic was less than enthusiastic, and nine months elapsed while Texans debated. They refused to surrender their public lands to the federal government, demanded to keep their slaves, and sought firm assurances of military protection. President James K. Polk dispatched General Zachary Taylor to Corpus Christi as proof of those pledges. Finally, on December 29, 1845, Texas entered the Union as the twenty-eighth state. The next month, Polk ordered General Taylor to cross the Nueces River into land claimed by Mexico since the early days of the Republic. Five months later, a Mexican contingent challenged Taylor's forces near Resaca de la Palma, twenty miles north of the Rio Grande, and lost. The battle grew into what would be the United States' shortest, most profitable, and to some, most shameful war.

During the three years between statehood in 1845 and military victory in 1848, not a single survey was filed with the General Land Office. Yet this did not impede the brokers, bankers, and speculators who snapped up Camp Hood lands surveyed during the late Republic Era. They jumped at the chance to hold land in the new state of Texas, perfecting patents on 130 parcels of the land out of 160 patents issued for the period from 1837 to 1849. Every one of those patents was sold within the same year. After the war, with the return of the Texas Rangers, surveyors once again ventured into Camp Hood lands, marking out nineteen new surveys. Hardly the banner year of 1844, when surveyors filed a total of seventy-seven plats, but respectable progress nonetheless.

Many of these surveys broke into new territory outside the Leon River valley. A clutch of plots lay along the last five miles of Henson Creek before it entered the Leon, across from the present-day community of Mound. Ten miles south of Henson Creek was a second group of surveys set within a short, flat valley fed by waters from Oak Branch and punctuated on three sides by distinctive promontories, solitary hills that rose in stark relief from the surrounding land; running counterclockwise from the north were Smith Mountain, Read Mountain, then to the east Sugar Loaf Mountain and Elm Knob, and on the south Trapnell Point, standing apart from the continuous southern line of the Post Oak Mountains. Crossing to the other side of the Post Oak Mountains was the South Fork of Nolan Creek, where some eight decades later the railroad would place the town of Killeen.

Aside from the Henson Creek and Oak Branch surveys, the largest number of surveys laid out in the first twelve years were along Cowhouse Creek. In the



same way the Leon River divided Coryell County into equal halves, Cowhouse Creek sliced across the pear-shaped Camp Hood lands at their widest part, creating northern and southern regions. With the exception of those along Oak Branch, the vast majority of surveys during this period occurred in the northwestern part of Camp Hood lands. While most parcels held close to Cowhouse Creek, claiming valuable access to water, several western plots ranged along the intermediate flatlands north of Cowhouse Creek and below the Manning Mountains. Some surveys even captured lands deep within and north of the Manning Mountains, where the headwaters to Bear Creek and Henson Creek formed. Still more surveys fell within the Stampede Creek valley, extending due south from the Manning Mountains until it entered Cowhouse Creek five miles east of present-day Pidcoke. In contrast to the large number of surveys in the northern and western portions of the Camp Hood lands, virtually the entire region south of Cowhouse Creek during the 1840s remained outside the surveyor's range of activity.

All of these surveys—196 in all—held out the promise of rich farmlands along beautiful streams, nestled within verdant valleys. Within five years, the three bundles of surveys—Henson Creek, Oak Branch, and western Cowhouse Creek—would become the seeds from which the first communities would grow. And in the meantime, the surveyors' notes became patents, and the patents were kept or deeded to new owners. Over the succeeding dozen years, records indicate nearly four hundred transactions—deed transfers, sales, and exchanges—on those 196 surveys, suggesting continued speculative interest in the region. But the promised land remained just a promise of the future. As far as anyone can tell, the decade of the 1840s came to a close without one single immigrant arriving to settle the surveyed lands.

It would seem that nothing had changed much between 1820 and 1848. One can detect little difference between the land and its inhabitants in those twenty-eight years and say, the previous fifty years or even five hundred years. Valleys widened and deepened from continued erosion and played host to the same species of plants and animals. Buffalo still wandered through the region in 1849, as did bear and deer and squirrel. Native American tribes still drank from the streams and camped beneath the hills, though the more-recent tribes came under different names, wore different outfits, and rode horses. It would seem the only changes in those twenty-eight years were merely paper changes, but what a difference they made. Diplomats drew the lines that demarked two great nations. Empresarios took maps and etched

borders for twenty-five land grants. Surveyors drew plats that supported patents and deeds filed in Austin by brokers and sold in New Orleans and New York. These pieces of paper, promoted in handbills and published in newspapers, brought Anglo-Americans to the Leon River, to the very edge of the Camp Hood lands. But the new settlers did not cross over. The immigrants that flooded into Texas after 1820 never entered the hilly valleys of the Lampasas Cut Plain. Instead, they kept to the flat Blacklands to the east and south, if they stayed at all. But each year the county boundaries to the east drew nearer, the supply roads grew longer, and the settlers came closer.

- 1847 U.S. Army troops capture Mexico City (September 14)
- 1848 Gold discovered in California (January 24)  
Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed (February 2)
- 1849 Forts established in Texas along inner line of defense (March)  
Gold seekers arrive in Texas to head for California (April)  
Fort Gates established (October 25)
- 1850 Bell County formed
- 1852 Fort Gates abandoned as a permanent post by the military
- 1853 Texas sets aside Railroad Reserve
- 1854 Coryell County formed
- 1857 Two years of severe drought begin
- 1858 Railroad Reserve cancelled
- 1859 Last serious Indian raid in Bell County (March)
- 1861 Texas secedes from the Union (February 23)  
Abraham Lincoln inaugurated as president (March 4)
- 1865 Confederate Army surrenders at Appomattox Courthouse (April 9)

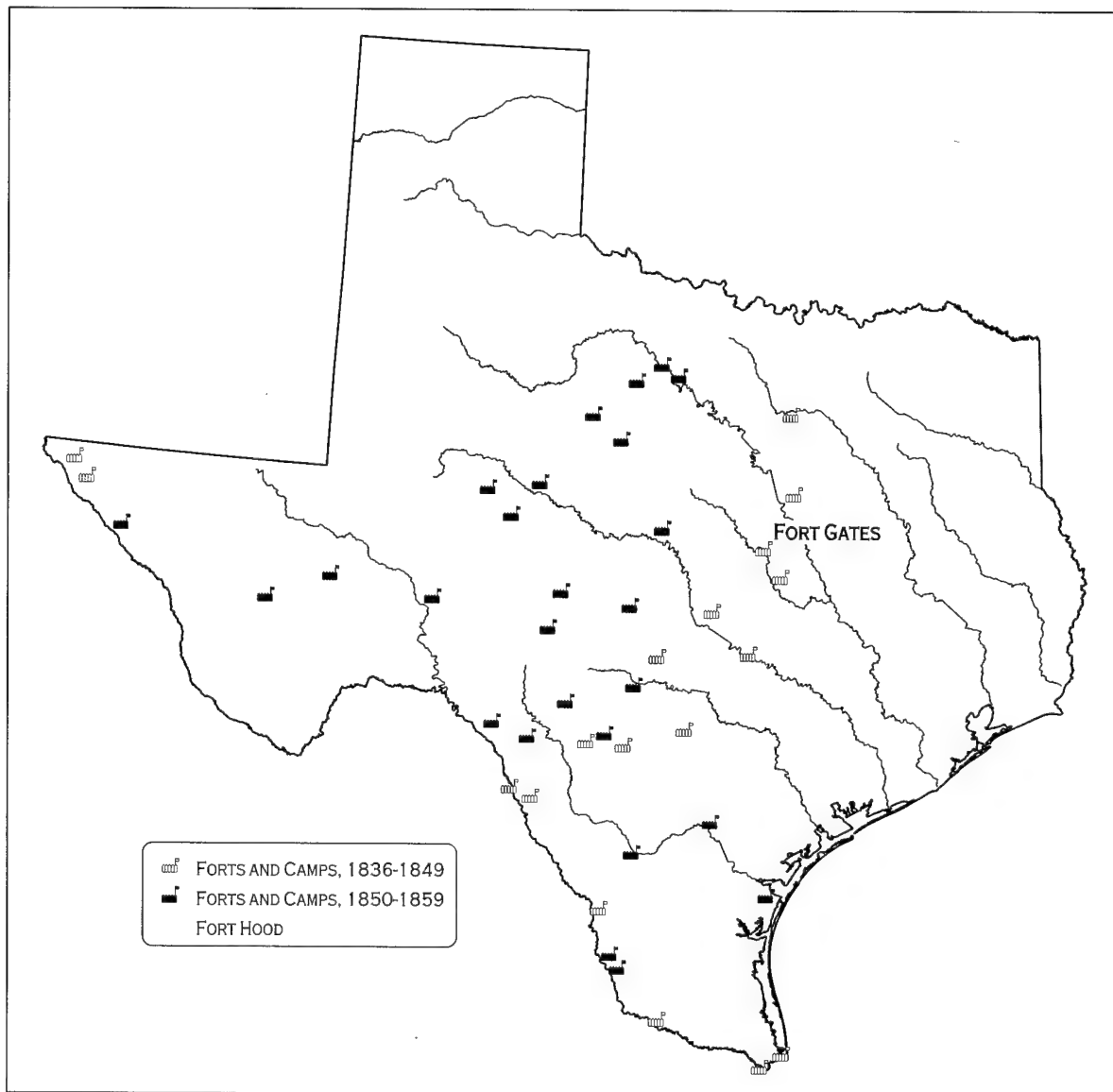
# FIRST IMPRESSIONS

## 1848-1865

### Out on the Frontier

When Mexican negotiators came to the bargaining table in December 1848, they were prepared to concede all the territory the United States demanded as a result of the seventeen-month war that had ended with the capture of Mexico City. Likewise, Nicholas Trist, the American diplomat in charge of negotiating the peace treaty, showed a willingness to make any concession that moved negotiations forward without jeopardizing the treaty's chance of ratification by the U.S. Senate.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, when the Mexican commissioners introduced Article XI, calling for the protection of the property and safety of those living in what was soon to become northern Mexico, Trist kept an open mind as he studied its terms. Article XI stipulated that the United States would "forcibly restrain" incursions of "savage tribes"; if they could not be stopped in time, then those tribes would be punished by the United States as if the raids "were committed . . . against its own citizens."<sup>2</sup> When Trist and the three Mexican negotiators signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, Article XI was intact. The Senate ratified an amended version two months later. Two sections were altered and another removed altogether, but Article XI, with its provision to protect Mexicans from border-crossing Indians, survived the acrimonious debates. Nevertheless, it would shortly become the most detested aspect of the treaty, aside from the boundary itself.

To make good on this part of the treaty, the U.S. Army in 1849 began constructing a line of forts along the Rio Grande from the Gulf of Mexico to El Paso, and then west into California. At the same time, the Army constructed another defensive barrier through the middle of Texas. This second line of forts, following the northward sweep of the Balcones Escarpment, would protect frontier settlements, as the government had promised the Republic of Texas three years earlier. Brevet Major General George M. Brooke selected sites primarily along established Comanche trails. Most were within the limestone hills of the Edwards Plateau, and with the exception of Fort Martin



Military forts and camps in Texas, 1836-1859 (adapted from Stephens and Holmes 1989).

Scott, all were at least twenty to fifty miles west of the nearest settlement, many on property owned by lawyers and other individuals associated with the U.S. military in San Antonio.<sup>3</sup> As with the Rio Grande forts, these positions would create a buffer zone between farmers and Indians, with the Army standing guard in the middle.

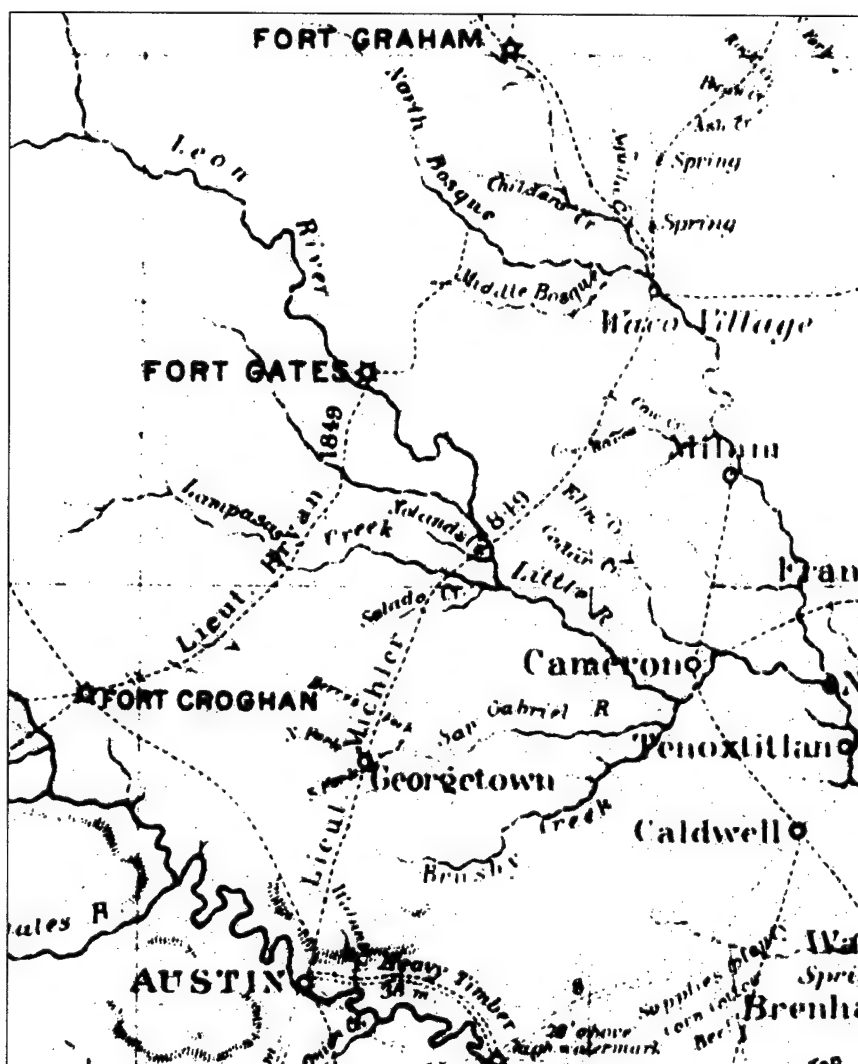
Five of the new outposts were established in March of 1849, one in June, and the last (Fort Gates) in late October. The delay in building Fort Gates may have been due to an outbreak of cholera in San Antonio, a typical result of camp conditions, spread by troop movements. The disease took Major Collinson Reed Gates, who died at his station in Fort Martin Scott in late June 1849. The next fort built was named in his honor.<sup>4</sup> The construction delay also may have been due to an urgent need for escorts to protect the survey

team marking the new road to El Paso, and also to guard the ill-equipped, ill-informed boomers crossing Texas for the gold fields of California. For it was not until the first snows blocked the Sierra Nevada passes that an Army patrol led by William R. Montgomery would return to the task at hand—establishing Fort Gates.

Built in the middle of what later would become Coryell County, Fort Gates stood on the north bank of the Leon River just beyond a stand of post oaks that extended several hundred feet to the river's edge. Reporting back to Major Brooke after his October 1849 inspection tour, Lieutenant Whiting said that the Leon River ran through "one of the finest valleys" along his route, "covered with a heavy growth of timber and comprising a great deal of fine lands."<sup>5</sup> However, the necessity of siting Fort Gates in late autumn concealed a significant flaw that Whiting missed. Cool air and early frosts had already killed off the mosquitoes, cowflies, and other pests that flourished along the lowland banks of the Leon River. The seriousness of the problem would not become apparent until the following spring, when warm weather and abundant rains caused the river to overflow its banks into nearby brush-filled lowlands, producing a marshy, stagnant region that brought malarial conditions. Each summer thereafter, soldiers stationed at Fort Gates suffered the "debilitating effects of intermittent fever,"<sup>6</sup> and each winter they faced blasts of cold air that barreled off the plains and down the wide Leon River valley, unmoderated by the trees that stood along their backs. When it came time to move the defensive cordon farther west, Fort Gates was the first to be evacuated.

With new troops came new roads. The first troops to arrive at Fort Gates marched along the upper Camino Real from San Antonio to San Marcos, then north to Austin. At this point, the soldiers veered away from the old road to Milam, taking a more-northern path that crossed the San Gabriel at Georgetown (instead of the old crossing two miles downstream) and forded Salado Creek at the springs, putting the small town of Salado firmly on the map. Farther north, the troops waded across the Lampasas River near Childers Mill, about four miles south of present-day Belton. The troops forged the Leon River six miles upstream from the Little River Fort (near the location of the current Belton Lake dam). On the north bank of the Leon River, the troops left the main road and curved northwest near Moody, dropping into the river valley just above Fort Gates. From the Leon River, the main road continued on to the Brazos River, crossing near the Waco village and

then to Dallas where it joined with Preston's Road.<sup>7</sup> This new route from Georgetown to Waco, known as the Military Road, became the first stage route from Austin.



Detail from Map of Texas and Part of New Mexico, compiled in the Bureau of Topographl. Engrs. chiefly for military purposes, 1857, showing the Fort Gates area (courtesy of the Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin).

overland, and in later years even those items were sometimes loaded on wagons.<sup>9</sup> Quartermasters imported the usual foodstuffs such as sugar, coffee, flour, and beans from Galveston and Indianola, but the meat products—pork, chicken, and beef—were purchased locally and delivered to the camp. Horses grazed on buffalo grass near the fort but needed hay as a supplement, especially in winter. Even plank wood and posts needed for officers' quarters were hauled from lumber mills twelve miles south of Bastrop, some hundred miles away.

Another road was developed to bring these much-needed supplies to Fort Gates. This route ran southeast from the fort, following the north bank of the

A communications road connected five frontier forts from Fort Martin Scott at Fredericksburg to Fort Worth, scribing the outermost frontier boundary as it existed in 1849. Lieutenant Bryan surveyed the route that ran south from Fort Gates, crossed Cowhouse Creek, and passed near Sugar Loaf Mountain on its way to the Comanche Gap on the Lampasas River. Its precise route cannot be determined from the sketchy field drawings, but it is clear the road cut through the middle of the Camp Hood lands.<sup>8</sup>

The two companies of the Eighth Infantry Regiment garrisoned at Fort Gates (an average of 85–110 men, including officers) needed a constant stream of supplies. Everything except firewood and water had to be carried

Leon River past the Little River Fort and Bryans Station into the farmlands around Cameron, the seat of Milam County. The quartermaster contracted with Orville T. Tyler, Colonel William C. Dalrymple, and Henry McKay to carry forage.<sup>10</sup> They drove long lines of ox carts up from the rich farm region in Milam County, purchasing corn, hay, and feed as they went. Occasionally, corn that bounced out of the wagons fell into fertile soil and grew. Like green mile markers, corn stalks lined the supply road, one every few hundred feet along the north side of the Little River to Fort Gates. Nicknamed the Old Corn Road, the route roughly followed present-day U.S. Highway 190 from Cameron to Temple. When the garrison moved west to Fort Phantom Hill in 1852, the contract continued, as did the wagon trains; in their wake, the Corn Road stretched westward.<sup>11</sup>

The process of subdividing the enormous territory in the Milam District and Robertson County began in 1846 with the creation of two smaller counties located along the southern limits of those districts. The seats of the new Milam and Robertson Counties served as judicial centers for the rest of the district. In 1848, the communities of Georgetown, Nolan, and Waco petitioned the government to form three new counties. Georgetown was approved as the seat of Williamson County, but the committee rejected the other two as premature. In the next legislative session, with the five federal forts under construction, Nolan and Waco submitted their petition a second time; this time it passed. On January 22, 1850, the dawn of a new decade saw two new counties carved out of the Old Milam District: McLennan County, with Waco as its seat, and Bell County, named after Governor Peter H. Bell, with Belton (Bell-town) as its seat.<sup>12</sup>

The presence of Fort Gates was an invitation to settlers to move close for protection. Orville Tyler established a farm downstream from the fort, where he kept his wagons and stored the forage purchased for the Army. In December 1850 his marriage to Caroline Childers, daughter of Goldsby Childers, marked the first entry in the ledger of the newly created Bell County. Chief Justice John Danley conducted the ceremony at Fort Gates, attended by officers and friends. Administratively, Fort Gates fell within the jurisdiction of Bell County, relying on Belton clerks to maintain its court records and deeds. This would be the case for the next few years. The rule of thumb held that communities in the unorganized portion of Old Milam District had to travel to the nearest county seat to the south or east for official matters until such time as they had sufficient population to warrant a separate county.



With organized counties immediately to its south and east and a federal fort at its center fed by several good roads, the region began to bustle with activity. For the first time in over fourteen years, permanent settlers arrived in the area. Among the earliest to arrive were Thomas Deaton, his wife Harriet, and their two sons; Sol Friley, the fort sutler or merchant; David Smith, a sixty-year-old gentleman from Tennessee; and the rest of the Childers clan, comprising Prior Childers, his wife Julia, and their three-month-old baby, Thomas, along with the patriarch of the Childers family, Captain Goldsby Childers and his two youngest children. Orville Tyler brought two slaves to help with the grain hauling, and Robert Childers used three slaves to work his cattle ranch. Within three years, this small group of twenty-seven people would become a crowd of more than two hundred, all living and working the lands around Fort Gates.

Probably the most fascinating immigrant story from this time period occurred well outside the protective confines of Fort Gates. It involved one of the most famous painters of the Far West, George Catlin. Catlin's simple paintings, completed in the mid-1830s while on summer tour along the Missouri River, captured some of the earliest images of Plains Indians chasing buffalo on horseback. A self-made conservationist and amateur anthropologist, Catlin wanted to bring the Great Plains experience to the common man in the city as a way of protecting the region. Instead of merely displaying his paintings, Catlin packed up drums, bows and arrows, shields, tents, clothes, and, just to be safe, a few Native Americans—men, women, and children—and transported the entire lot at his own expense to New York and then to Europe as part of a traveling exhibit. By 1850, Catlin was destitute. His collection of artifacts was crammed into a single-room apartment in London; several of his Indian companions had tired, and others were sick. Catlin yearned for the American West.

When a group of investors offered Catlin the chance to lead a party of English colonists to Texas, he took it, even though it meant promoting Anglo settlement in the same Indian homelands he had spent the last decade trying to protect. Throughout the summer of 1850, Catlin tirelessly promoted central Texas as the ideal farm country, although he had never seen the land he was selling. Days before the boat left for Texas, the duplicitous investors replaced Catlin with a new expedition leader, British Navy Captain Sir Edward Belcher. Belcher would later make his name in the Arctic search for John Franklin, but before he sailed for the frozen wastelands he made a quick voyage to Galveston with thirty English families of "delicate habits" who wanted a better

life along the Brazos River. Belcher abandoned his commission soon after landing in Galveston, leaving the immigrants under the care of his lieutenant, one Mr. Charles Finch MacKenzie. After weeks of trudging along their 250-mile trek to the "City of Kent," they arrived on the banks of Cowhouse Creek.<sup>13</sup>

When the settlers arrived at their new community, they found the land less than advertised. After suffering through a miserable winter with little shelter and less food, the group decided to pull up stakes and move to the Brazos River bottomlands. A few stayed behind, but most followed the inexperienced lieutenant to the alternative site near present-day Kopperl in northern Bosque County. This second location was no better; alcohol, Indian raids, incompetence, crop failures, and bad luck dispirited the settlers, and within a few years, the City of Kent on the Brazos was abandoned. Only those stubborn few who stayed behind on Cowhouse Creek were able to make a go of it. In time, a small town just beyond the Camp Hood lands would be known for the resilient members of the Pidcoke family.

### **Military Strategy in Central Texas**

Despite the enormous investment of money and manpower, the Army could not stop Comanches from slipping through the line of forts and attacking isolated homesteads on the Texas frontier, some even within sight of larger towns like Austin and San Antonio. Relying on infantry over the more-expensive mounted dragoons left much to be desired in response time and presented little credible deterrent. As commander of the Eighth Military Department, General Brooke wrote the adjutant general that even an Army of "three thousand men or more stationed at the frontier" could not prevent small raiding parties from slipping through the lines to "commit their acts of murder and depredation and instantly return to their own country."<sup>14</sup>

Whatever problems the other forts experienced in the early 1850s, Fort Gates was rarely bothered by hostile Indians; the raids along the Brazos and Little Rivers that so tormented early settlers throughout the 1840s became less frequent once soldiers appeared on the Leon River. As it happened, the fort occupied the northern homeland of the most accommodating tribe in central Texas. In 1846, George Tyler reported a band of Tonkawa Indians camped at Salado Springs, frightening inexperienced households, occasionally pilfering "small articles of food, clothing and household effects," but otherwise acting peaceable. Nevertheless, neighbors in the area formed a committee

that rode down to the camp and "firmly requested them to leave," and they did. Even the Tawakoni and Waco tribes farther up the Brazos proved less worrisome than the southern bands of the Comanches, whose main campgrounds were hundreds of miles away to the north and west.

General Brooke wanted to take the battle to the Comanche homelands instead of waiting to respond to each attack; however, Brooke died on March 9, 1849, before his new policy could be initiated. General Persifor Smith moved into his position, with instructions to "revise the whole system of defense in Texas, cutting costs whenever possible, building new posts if needed, and invading Indian country to force them to terms."<sup>15</sup> Smith devised a new system that kept the old defensive line in place while constructing a second line of posts farther out on the frontier. In theory, infantry soldiers manning this outer line of forts would act as the early warning system, notifying the mounted dragoon regiments stationed at the interior forts whenever raiding parties crossed the outer defenses. This would give infantry enough time to march into position, blocking their retreat while the dragoons rushed to confront them head-on before they had a chance to cause serious damage.<sup>16</sup> It looked good on paper, but never worked in practice.

In the midst of a heated interdepartmental squabble, General William G. Belknap of the Seventh Military Department selected a site for a new camp associated with the line of posts from Arkansas to New Mexico. Eventually named Fort Belknap, the site was located on the Salt Fork of the Brazos River. General Smith selected a site for the second camp at a landmark called "Phantom Hill." In the spring of 1852, with barracks and quarters at Fort Phantom Hill barely started<sup>17</sup>, two companies departed Fort Gates for their new outpost, leaving behind a small quartermaster detail to maintain a supply depot for goods purchased in the farmland. By this time, Orville Tyler and a man called King were cultivating corn for the Army on their own property a few miles downstream, eliminating the need to haul forage from the Milam County farms.

### **Establishing a Framework**

Efforts to carve Coryell County out of the Milam Land District began before the army left. Orville Tyler agitated for the formation of a new county, arguing that with the deactivation of Fort Gates, a county seat would have to be formed to attract and hold settlers. A vote was taken, and the electorate approved Tyler's proposal.<sup>18</sup> A petition signed by these settlers was attached

to the bill submitted by District 28 representative, John Patrick. The bill went to committee in the spring of that year, but there it languished.

The next attempt proved more successful. When the new session began in November 1853, George Burney of District 45 placed before the legislature a petition signed by thirty-eight Leon River residents asking for a separate county, yet to be named, that would "comprise the same limits that were included in the former petition." Three days later, Burney formally offered his bill to create a new county, supported with an additional petition signed by thirty-six citizens of Bell County. The Bell County petition and Burney's accompanying bill made one important change: the citizens of Bell County wanted the new county named after President Franklin Pierce.

When debate on the bill began in January 1854, the representative from Galveston offered an amendment reestablishing Coryell as the county name. The Harrison County representative objected, preferring a sitting president to a dead surveyor's assistant, but his motion failed, and the bill creating Coryell County passed both houses. Governor Elisha Pease signed the act into law on February 4, 1854. The next move depended on the citizens of Coryell County.

Provisions of the new law required an election of county officials within three months. A few weeks later, fifty-three residents of the new county cast their vote for the county officers. The newly elected officers met and organized Coryell County on March 15, 1854.<sup>19</sup> The law also said the new government should select three sites for the county seat, all within five miles of the center of the county, and let the people decide. The three sites stood on two different tracts, but all the property was owned by the same man, R. C. Grant. Whatever the outcome, the new chief justice, Orville Tyler, wanted Mr. Grant to donate a suitable portion of his land for the future county seat, to be called Gatesville.<sup>20</sup> Grant complied.

Certain of his civic responsibility and "wide awake to his own interest," Grant assisted in the survey of Gatesville, then advertised the sale of town lots in newspapers along the Brazos River.<sup>21</sup> A huge crowd arrived that May, many drawn from communities near present-day Waco, Belton, and Marlin (Milam). Stacks of rawhide lumber—rough-cut elm, oak, and cottonwood—produced in Grant's sawmill stood ready for those wishing to build a home. Rawhide lumber was a nickname for any seasoned, nonpine, rough-sawn wood acknowledged to be "hard as rock and difficult to drive a nail into."<sup>22</sup> But it was the only locally available wood. Grant cracked open a few barrels of liquid

# COMMUNITIES

Rural communities were the fabric that bound people together on what is now Fort Hood. A sense of community came with things shared by people clustered together on the landscape. The churches, schools, post offices, and commercial services were the tethers that tied them to the land and to one another, whether they lived on isolated farms and ranches or next door to the general store. Evidence from various historical records and informants suggests that forty-one named communities emerged between the 1850s and 1910; some lasted only a few years while others lasted nearly a century. At least seventeen survived until the 1942 Army acquisition and nine

more were closed by the second major acquisition in the 1950s. Three rural hamlets—Pidcoke, Reese Creek, and Willow Springs—all of which straddle the modern Fort Hood boundary but are mostly outside the base, have survived to the present.

Most physical remains of the rural communities, farms, and ranches are long gone. A half century after they were abandoned, many are now little more than a few rocks marking where a structure once stood or a scatter of metal, glass, and china fragments near a rock-lined well. The images of these places survive only in peoples' minds, but the fact that former residents still hold reunions at the end of the twentieth century is testament to their strong sense of community. The memories of life in the rural communities on Fort Hood are alive and well, and many stories remain to be told.



John T. Brashear's store at Tama, ca. 1898-1900.

Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

# **DATES OF OCCUPATION AND SERVICES AT RURAL COMMUNITIES ON FORT HOOD\***

## **SELECTED SERVICES** (1882-1913)

COMMUNITY NAME	CHURCH	SCHOOL	MILL	GIN	POST OFFICE	BLACKSMITH	STORE	DATES OF OCCUPATION										
								1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
RUTH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<div></div>										
SPRING HILL		✓					✓	<div></div>										
(OLD) SUGAR LOAF								<div></div>										
ANTELOPE	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	<div></div>										
SOUTH NOLAN								<div></div>										
OWL CREEK	✓							<div></div>										
HENSON'S CREEK								<div></div>										
COLD SPRINGS	✓			✓				<div></div>										
NEW HOPE	✓	✓	✓	✓				<div></div>										
PALO ALTO	✓	✓						<div></div>										
SPARTA		✓			✓	✓	✓	<div></div>										
FRIENDSHIP	✓	✓						<div></div>										
BRANCHVILLE**								<div></div>										
CROSSVILLE	✓	✓						<div></div>										
CLEAR CREEK**	✓	✓						<div></div>										
BLAND	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	<div></div>										
(NEW) SUGAR LOAF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<div></div>										
OKAY	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		<div></div>										
BEVERLY								<div></div>										
PIDCOKE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<div></div>										
HAMPTON								<div></div>										
BROWN'S CREEK	✓	✓						<div></div>										
HUBBARD		✓				✓	✓	<div></div>										
SCHLEY	✓	✓						<div></div>										
BROOKHAVEN	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	<div></div>										
FARMER'S BRANCH**								<div></div>										
PLEASANT GROVE	✓	✓						<div></div>										
TURNOVER	✓	✓	✓			✓		<div></div>										
REESE CREEK	✓	✓						<div></div>										
BOAZ	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	<div></div>										
WILLOW SPRINGS	✓	✓						<div></div>										
JINK					✓			<div></div>										
PILOT KNOB		✓						<div></div>										
TAMA	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	<div></div>										
STAMPEDE		✓						<div></div>										
HARMONY	✓	✓						<div></div>										
ARISTO					✓			<div></div>										
REFUGE	✓							<div></div>										
SEATTLE		✓		✓	✓		✓	<div></div>										
ELIGA	✓			✓	✓	✓		<div></div>										
EWING	✓	✓				✓	✓	<div></div>										

\* INFORMATION IS BASED ON BEST AVAILABLE HISTORIC INFORMATION (E.G., ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS, PUBLISHED HISTORIES, AND PUBLIC RECORDS), AS COMPILED FOR FREEMAN ET AL. (2001).

\*\* LOCATION OF COMMUNITY NOT CONFIRMED.

refreshment, and the sale commenced at a lively pace. Within a year, twenty to thirty houses stood in the new town of Gatesville.

In addition to giving land for the city, Grant donated land for the first cemetery, public school, and jailhouse. He laid the first dam across the Leon River to power his sawmill, and a few miles farther upstream he installed the town's first whiskey still. During the boom years, Grant's mill kept a crew of ten men working long hours cutting planks for homes and businesses. He also ran the first ferry across the river. As a young boy, F. M. Cross helped his father haul

long logs for the ferry's keel. Cross reckoned Grant "did more for the town of Gatesville than any one of the first settlers."<sup>23</sup> Although he died in 1858, R. G. Grant's many improvements made a lasting contribution to the town, for several years the only town in Coryell County.

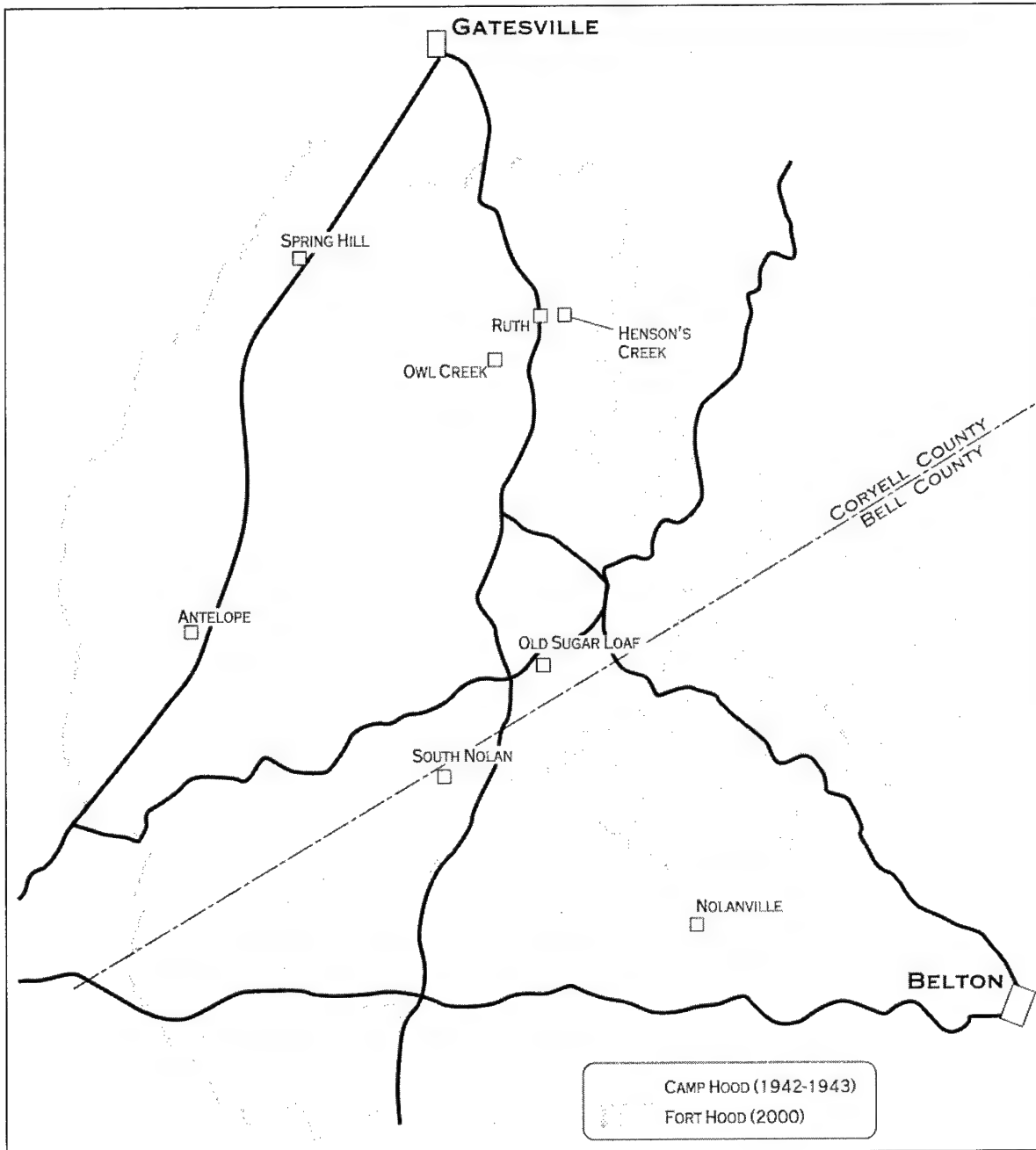
One of Gatesville's early residents was John H. Chrisman, who arrived in April 1854 from Arkansas. In addition to his contributions as Texas Ranger, mail carrier, builder, businessman, lawyer, and county judge, Chrisman wrote a remarkable firsthand account of the Texas pioneer days in Coryell County. Spanning 1854 to 1867, his handwritten narrative describes his personal experiences and those of his neighbors as they struggled to overcome the most difficult challenges the early settlers had to face.<sup>24</sup> The most complete history of Bell County comes from the hand of George W. Tyler, grandson of Orville T. Tyler. Although lacking the personal insight of Chrisman's book,

Tyler's work offers excellent historical research on the early days.<sup>25</sup>

Several small communities deep within Camp Hood lands sprang up about the time the Army departed. Sugar Loaf community had the earliest verifiable date of origin, 1852; it arose from the Oak Branch group of surveys. The community stood between Sugar Loaf Mountain and Read Mountain at the headwaters of Oak Branch and drew commerce and supplies from the southbound road out of old Fort Gates. The next community with a verifiable date of origin was Antelope, which stood in the middle of Latham Prairie, south of Cowhouse Creek. Overlooked by the first rush of surveys, Latham Prairie received increased attention after 1850. The area enclosed about thirty-five square miles of nearly flat, intermediate lands drained on the west by Table Rock Creek, on the east by House Creek, and on the north by



Pioneer Coryell  
County settler  
John H. Chrisman  
(1821-1922) surveyed  
the original townsite  
of Gatesville in 1854.  
He ultimately became  
an attorney and  
practiced law in  
Gatesville from 1866  
to 1922 (reprinted  
from Coryell County  
Genealogical Society  
1986).



Cowhouse Creek. At the very center of Latham Prairie stood Antelope Mound, a hill twenty feet high and visible for some distance. Cottonwood Creek began near this mound and ran northward into Cowhouse Creek.

The far northern portion of the Camp Hood lands saw a flurry of activity in the 1850s. Though dates of establishment cannot be confirmed, two of the earliest communities were Ruth and Spring Hill. Named for the biblical character, the community of Ruth arose out of the Henson Creek group of surveys and was located south of the creek near the eastern face of the Henson Mountains.

Roads and settlements  
in the Camp Hood  
area, 1858.



A few years later, the community of Henson's Creek was established less than half a mile downstream from Ruth.

One of the more popular locations for new surveys was along Owl Creek, a small stream flowing in a narrow valley through the upland plateau formed by the Henson Mountains. Owl Creek runs eastward, draining into the Leon River near the present-day town of Moffat. During the mid-1850s, surveyors laid out two dozen plots along a five-mile stretch of that stream, and the community of Owl Creek arrived on the scene in 1857. The southern face of this same plateau terminated in a series of hills jutting down like fingers into the Cowhouse valley. Locals named each fingertip, beginning in the east: McBride Point, Wolf Point, and the longest finger, Robinette Point. Another group of surveys was completed in the 1850s within the box canyons formed by these fingers and watered by tributaries of the Cowhouse.

The community of Spring Hill, near the headwaters of Shoal Creek in the far northwestern corner of Camp Hood lands (about seven miles south of Gatesville), stood at the center of more surveying activity. And fifteen miles due south of Spring Hill was another, later block of new surveys. From this group would spring the town of Copperas Cove.

The 1850s also saw settlers move into areas beyond Camp Hood lands, near the junction of Cowhouse Creek and the Leon River. The Walton brothers, for example, came to the lower Cowhouse region in 1854, flush from gold they had mined in California.<sup>26</sup> A few years later, James Clements settled two miles upstream on Taylor's Branch near Cedar Grove, a small community of about twenty-five people. Nolanville also was established in this period; it lay on the north bank of South Nolan Creek about halfway between Belton and Killeen.

The early days on the Camp Hood lands supported those who were frugal and resourceful. When cowhides were scarce, dog hides might work. Instead of bowls, jars, or dippers, a person could use gourds. Raised in the side garden and scraped clean of seeds and dried, gourds could be filled with any number of commodities—water, salt, lard, or gun powder. Bed frames were made of split logs with holes drilled along the sides to pull rope "slats." Buffalo hides covered the rope, then were covered by a feather mattress, topped by a counterpane or quilt.<sup>27</sup>

Store-bought supplies as were available came from Austin, Galveston, and San Antonio along roads built by the Army. These routes were maintained by the new county administration with labor provided by area

residents as a form of county taxation. County officials sectioned roads into administrative units known as road precincts. Men living within a certain road precinct participated in work crews during the off-season, filling holes, removing rocks, and widening the dirt pathways into more-serviceable wagon routes. As new towns were established in the 1850s, the county created new roads to connect them with Gatesville and major cities to the south. By 1859, Coryell County had nine road precincts; all but one traversed Camp Hood lands.

### **Speculation and the Railroad Reserve**

More settlement might have occurred in the mid-1850s if not for absentee owners, who held a substantial amount of land along fertile river valleys. For example, Michael Costley's heirs owned a first-class grant, Thomas W. House owned a third-class grant, and Philip Coe owned a donation grant, all on Cowhouse Creek. These three grants encompassed more than five thousand acres, but none appear to have been occupied.<sup>28</sup>

Regional stability in the early 1850s attracted more speculation than ever before, as demonstrated by double the number of deed transactions from the previous decade. Speculative investors purchased land with the hope of profiting from those who wanted to settle or from other capitalists willing to take greater financial risks. In one example, Charles Leland of Buffalo, New York, acquired a certificate for one league and one labor of land in Bell County in 1853 at a cost of \$750 (less than \$0.20 an acre). Leland conveyed the land to a New York City resident in 1859 for \$14,000, or just over \$3 per acre, an astonishing profit. Perhaps the most remarkable example of speculation was the effort of Joseph W. Webb of Washington, D.C., who advertised the sale of about sixty thousand acres he had acquired in 1857. His pitch proffered bountiful land embracing many contiguous, productive farms, and better terms for those who purchased several tracts. This was speculation on a large scale. Most likely, Webb's profit was fleeting; since he had used the land as security against a loan on which he defaulted, the land was sold at public auction in 1861.<sup>29</sup>

Absentee landowners and speculation in Coryell County lands may have accounted for some of the sparseness of settlements in the region in the early 1850s, but legislation had an impact as well. The same representatives who passed the bill to create Coryell County approved a measure, almost in

the same breath, that would hamper the new county they had made. In that 1853–1854 session, the Texas legislature passed a bill placing the issue of a transcontinental railroad on the table, and as a result of its sweeping provisions, Coryell County's growth was stalled for nearly half a decade.

Leaders in the Texas coastal cities had called for a railroad from Galveston to San Antonio as far back as the early 1840s. Extending the railroad beyond to El Paso and thence to the Pacific presented a logical, if extravagant, next step—extravagant in that the first party of emigrants had only just crossed the snowcapped Sierras into Mexican California in 1841, and they had just barely made it alive.<sup>30</sup> The dream of a Gulf Coast-to-California railroad remained a peculiarly Texas ambition until the eastern press spread word of John C. Fremont's Rocky Mountain exploits in the mid-1840s. From then on, congressional delegates in Washington raised the issue every year. Tangled in economics, personalities, and sectional prejudices, the subject eventually consumed more of the Senate's time than any other subject, even slavery.<sup>31</sup> In March of 1853, an exasperated Congress ordered a comprehensive survey to determine—scientifically—which of the five proposed routes was the most feasible. Survey teams launched across the Plains with great haste to complete their work within the hopelessly short time allotted them. The final report would not appear for another year and a half.<sup>32</sup> An anxious Texas refused to wait.

On December 22, 1853, with the survey teams still deep in the field and the deadline two weeks away, the Texas legislature committed a wide swath of its state lands to entice eastern railroad concerns to commit to a trans-Texas southern route. The decision to offer public lands to private companies in exchange for building railroads was a recent innovation for Texas, and one the legislators hoped would help motivate construction.<sup>33</sup> Every time they met, legislators raised the allotment—from eight sections to sixteen, then to an unheard of twenty sections per mile pulled from a strip of land 30 miles wide on either side of the tracks. To reduce the inevitable land speculation and provide the widest possible options for locating track, the legislature took one last step to sweeten the pot. They withdrew from sale all public lands lying between latitudes thirty-one and thirty-three degrees north—a swath 133 miles wide, enclosing approximately 77,500 square miles, or nearly a third of the state.

Every acre of land—stretching from Louisiana to El Paso and from present-day Dallas to Belton—that had not already been patented was summarily

removed from the market by this legislative act. Surveyors were prohibited from surveying any of the public lands inside the "Pacific reservation."<sup>34</sup> Immigration took a precipitous drop, as prospective settlers moving to Texas in the spring of 1854 had to either make arrangements with owners who had property surveyed and patented prior to "removal," or else take their chances squatting and hope the railroad surveyors chose a route at least thirty miles away.

Chafing under the restrictions the reserve imposed on obtaining land titles, a group of 141 citizens petitioned the Texas Senate in late July. In a cover letter, Thomas Keese explained that the reserve imposed unnecessary hardships on immigrants, who were generally "poor people" unable to purchase land from the patented land holders, leaving them with no other alternative than squatting. The petitioners noted, not entirely accurately, that all timbered lands and prime prairie lands had been located and only poor prairie lands without timber or water were left. In closing, the petitioners stated that, for some of them, 1856 represented their third season attempting to "make bread" (meaning grow wheat), but that they had been unsuccessful due to "the nearness of [the] grounds and the drought"<sup>35</sup> Within a few months, the railroad went bust, and the state legislature released lands held in reserve.

"Nearness of the grounds," as Thomas Keese put it, meant that the limestone rocks that lay so close to the surface made cultivation difficult. From the 1830s onward, surveyors remarked on the presence of pastureland in the hilly region south of the Leon River, where good grasslands and plentiful water eventually supported herds of cattle and horses. Except for the bottomland cornfields of R. G. Grant and Orville Tyler, few settlers planted more seed than needed to supply their immediate needs—a small plot of garden vegetables, a few rows of corn, perhaps an acre of wheat. Those who did plant corn and wheat found a ready market at two dollars a bushel.<sup>36</sup> The cancellation of the Railroad Reserve in 1857 encouraged ranchers (and a few more farmers), stimulating more land transactions than in any other year during that decade.<sup>37</sup> When the farmers arrived, they discovered rocky soil, a shortage of good timber for fencing (without which, free-ranging cattle could quickly destroy or consume a season's hard work), and, of particular concern, a drought.

By 1857, the drought had entered its second year. According to Chrisman's journal, the warm, dry summer resulted in a "very light crop" of corn, while

a late frost brought with it the failure of the wheat crop. Ranchers fared better than farmers. Native prairie grasses in the western portions of the county survived the heat well enough to provide ample forage for free-ranging cattle and horses. Those farmers who stayed behind laid the balance of their seed in the ground the next spring and crossed their fingers. But the summer of 1858 grew "extremely hot," Chrisman noted, especially at night. "A cool breeze would spring up from the south [around eight o'clock in the morning and] would increase almost to a gale—often so hard it was difficult to ride against it." Around dusk, the wind would die down and the nights would become "still, hot, and sultry." This pattern persisted for weeks on end. Dry winds skimmed a few Gulf clouds overhead, followed by stifling, cloudless nights, but never once released so much as a single drop of dew the next morning. Not only was farming a complete failure, but the water level had sunk so low that even rangelands were affected. "Mesquite grass in the river and creek valleys was dead and blown away," Chrisman lamented.<sup>38</sup> All the creeks and their branches stopped flowing, and by the end of 1858, the bed of the Leon River was "dry as a bone." Grant's mill on the Leon River, which sawed lumber and ground corn, shut down. In describing Coryell County to prospective immigrants, Jacob de Cordova said in 1858 that the town of Gatesville consisted of fifty houses, three lawyers, two physicians "who have but little to do," two hotels, and two grocery stores. All this aside, he thought the county should be doing better than it was, "but the severe drought of the past two seasons has been a great drawback to both town and county."<sup>39</sup> R. G. Grant would not live to see the new year. The weather for 1859 was the same as the year before; the fifth consecutive dry year, the third rainless summer.

"We often heard it remarked," said Chrisman, "that the country was fit for nothing but the Indian, and a white man was a fool for trying to take it away from them."<sup>40</sup> The Native American tribes suffered as much or more during the drought, and with their suffering came renewed conflict with white settlers. Beginning in 1857, warriors made frequent attacks, killing farmers, ranch hands, and lone settlers in distant parts of the county. Chrisman, and others in town, formed frontier defense patrols and ranged the countryside looking for war parties.

More often than not, the Indians stole horses. With the increasing number of ranchers in the western districts of the county along Cowhouse Creek came large numbers of horses, raised on the open grassland and sold to the Army or to farmers in eastern counties. When the Indians found the frontier "full

of horses and not a sufficient amount of settlers in the country to protect them, they saw they had a picnic."<sup>41</sup> Whereas stockmen occasionally lost a head or two of cattle from nocturnal raids, Indians advancing during the full moon often escaped with a horseman's entire run without firing a shot. Many of the tenacious settlers, called "old stand-bys" by Chrisman, used oxen to cultivate their parched land, since a man might "retire at night the owner of several good horses and wake up the next morning and find the trail made by your last horse while being driven off." Chrisman estimated that at least two-thirds of the settlers west of Gatesville left and went back east. Years passed before the rancher and farmer recovered from the heartache of the 1850s drought.

### **Civil War Reaches Home**

Conditions returned to normal with the spring rains of 1860, but the scarcity caused by nature soon passed to scarcity caused by man. With the election of Abraham Lincoln in November, radical fervor rose to a pitch in Texas. Delegates met in February 1861 and drew up a Declaration of Causes explaining why Texas should secede from the Union. Recalling the assurances made by President Polk in 1845 and again in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the third item in the Declaration stated that, "the United States had failed to protect Texas against Indian and Mexican bandits." The following month, the citizens of Texas approved secession by an overwhelming margin, joining the Confederate States of America and replacing Governor Sam Houston with Lieutenant Governor Edward Clark. Men from Bell and Coryell Counties volunteered, then marched off to war. Samuel Bishop moved to Moody to escape the impending war, "but when secession orators began to speak and a brass band played Dixie, he joined the first company in Belton to march off to war."<sup>42</sup>

Merchants in Gatesville struggled to retain enough dry goods on their shelves after New York merchants stopped shipping to southern ports. Some items were available through New Orleans as late as 1862, but northern blockade and Confederate requisitions made basic supplies—coffee, sugar, and beans—nearly impossible to obtain, and few had money to pay for them. Whatever gold or silver coin existed was soon hidden away, leaving only Confederate scrip and barter to pay for goods. Most families did not have money of any sort, leaving store owners with few options but to extend credit,



Log cabin in Bell  
County (courtesy of  
*TEXAS HIGHWAYS*).

if possible, to their loyal, impoverished customers. Credit debts were extended for years, driving many merchants out of business.<sup>43</sup> Horses, already scarce due to Indian raids, became a rarity during the war, reserved for the Confederate army or men on Ranger duty. The same was true for rifles, powder, and sidearms. Every man old enough to ride was expected to assist in frontier protection. This left many women in charge of feeding children without supplies, raising crops without manpower, buying seed without hard currency, and protecting themselves without guns. The only thing good was the weather.

Plentiful rains filled the streams, yielding good crops and garden foods for homes left to fend for themselves. For the first year of the war, Coryell County retained enough men to work the fields and serve in frontier protection, but by late 1862, one-year enlistments had expired and the need for manpower only increased. As John Chrisman said, "The time had come when every able-bodied young man who refused to enlist and march to the front was considered a coward and not countenanced by the young ladies."<sup>44</sup> After persistent recruitment stripped the frontier of militia patrols, Indian attacks in 1863 grew bolder and more frequent.<sup>45</sup> People holed up and did the best they could. The next year, the governor placed George Erath, then in his sixties, in charge of a thousand men whose duty it was to protect the frontier from San Saba County to Johnson County.<sup>46</sup>

Some moved away and tried to make a life elsewhere. But most stayed, adapted, and looked for a better year. In the first ten years of Euro-American settlement on the Camp Hood lands a fort had arisen and then was abandoned, settlers came but were killed by Indian raiders, crops grew then died from drought, and towns started but were emptied by war. For those who had the ill-timed luck to arrive in 1856, when boom times ended and the drought began, this place did not leave a good first impression. However, those who could see the potential stayed; a bright future was just around the corner—next year, perhaps.

Meanwhile, in the valleys, canyons, and flatlands of western Bell and Coryell Counties, herds of cattle fattened themselves on high grass blessed with plentiful rains and refreshed themselves from streams filled once more with water. Left unattended, cattle from one herd mixed with another, cross-bred, and expanded their numbers each year by hundreds and thousands.<sup>47</sup> Like the buffalo that once roamed this land and ate the same grass, the cattle flourished. Neither Indian raiders nor cattle rustlers made a dent in the herds that spilled out of the Lampasas Cut Plain. When the war ended, they would be there waiting.



- 1865 Civil War ends (April 9)  
President Lincoln assassinated (April 26)  
Texas slaves learn of their emancipation (June 19)
- 1867 Abilene, Kansas, created as terminal on the Union Pacific Railroad
- 1869 Last Indian fight in Coryell County
- 1870 Texas readmitted to the Union (March 30)
- 1871 Jesse Clements moves cattle into Copperas Cove area
- 1872 Successful tanning of buffalo in Germany creates demand
- 1873 Economic depression  
The Grange formed in Salado, Bell County (July)
- 1874 Red River War commences as U.S. Cavalry tracks down hostile Plains tribes  
Vigilante group shoots eight horse thieves in Belton
- 1876 Farmer's Alliance forms in Lampasas  
General George A. Custer and U.S. Cavalry troops die at Battle of Little Big Horn (June 25)
- 1879 Last of the great buffalo herds cleared from Texas Panhandle-Plains
- 1880 Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad reaches Bell County line
- 1882 Temple established as railroad junction  
First train arrives in Belton (September)  
Tyler Tap reaches Gatesville (October)  
Copperas Cove moved to meet railroad junction
- 1886-1887 Worst winter on record kills off cattle trade in High Plains
- 1890 U.S. Census says "frontier" no longer exists  
Wounded Knee is last major action against Plains Indian tribes (December 29)

# LIVESTOCK AND STEEL PROSPERITY: 1865-1890

6

## Reconstruction

“E verything was at a stand still,” observed John Chrisman, recounting the spring and summer of 1865, the year the Civil War ended. Like a silence after the passing of a great storm, people living in central Texas continued daily routines molded by wartime constraints. A limited work force, shortage of hard currency, and minimal governmental structure placed the people in a lull. A mild winter and spring rains produced a healthy crop, mostly corn, on the limited farmland still under cultivation, and for the first few months after peace at Appomattox, little else changed. But by the time autumn turned the leaves, the winds of change had begun to sweep over Texas. The next two decades would bring profound and lasting changes to Bell and Coryell Counties.

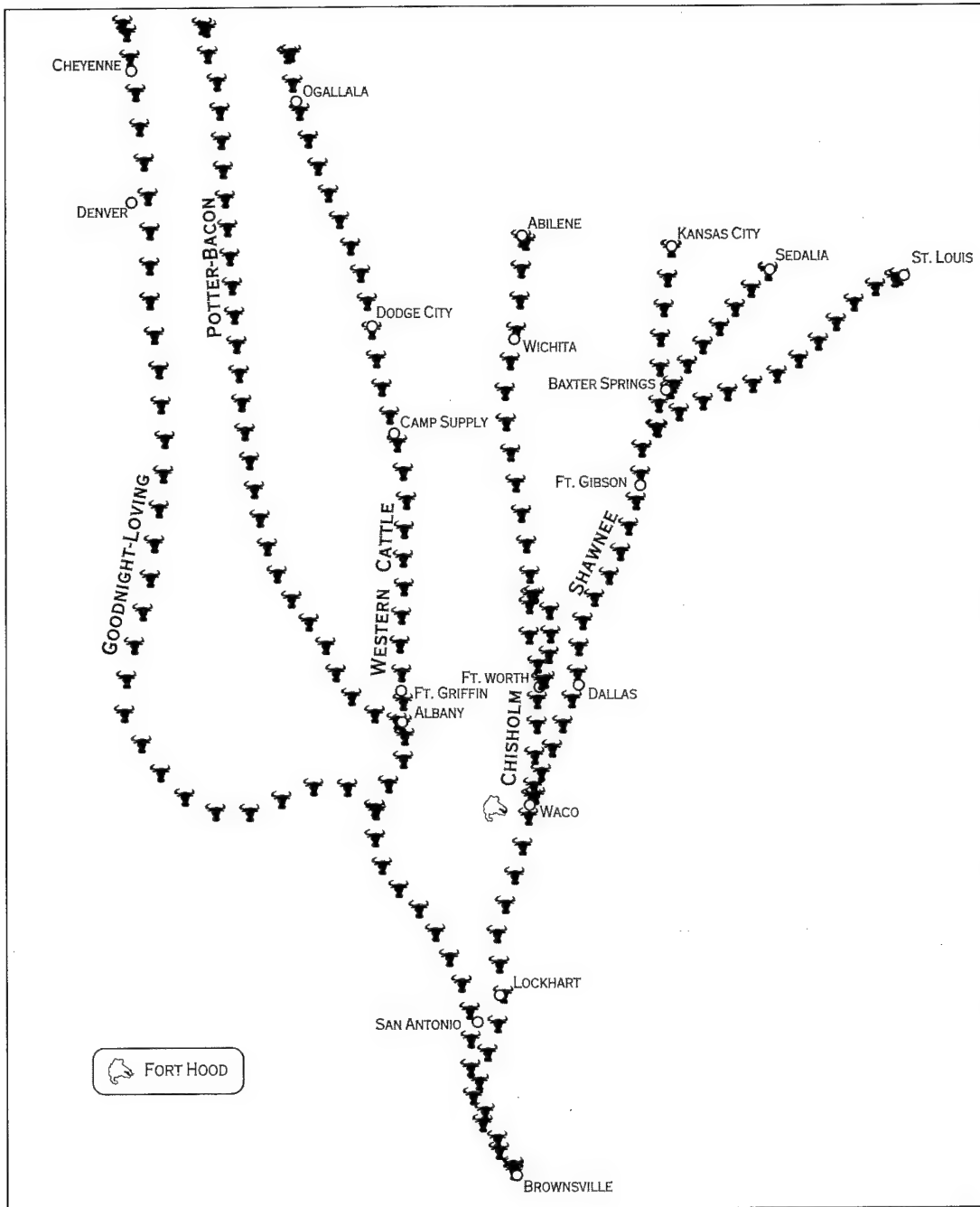
Former slaves learned of their emancipation on June 19, 1865, when Union troops landed in Galveston. Few farmers in southern Coryell County had relied on slaves; most were found north of Gatesville, or belonged to Judge Mayberry, the largest slaveholder in the county. That summer, a group of former slaves driven out of Hamilton County migrated down the Leon River and joined those leaving farms and owners in the Gatesville area. “They were turned loose without work, like rabbits, or animals in the woods.”<sup>1</sup> With the blessing of Judge Mayberry and other town leaders, the freedmen established a community on the west bank of the Leon River, across from Gatesville, that they called Lincolnville.<sup>2</sup> Residents built a church and school in the early 1870s and established a community life separate and distinct from that of Gatesville. Some were given small plots of land, but most worked as tenant farmers, saving twenty-five cents at a time until they could buy another acre of their own land.

Many of the local men and boys serving in the military had not returned by the autumn of 1865; those who arrived home quietly resumed their chores, repairs, and plowing, as if they had returned after stepping out for a break.

Adam Clements, eldest son of James Clements, came home to his father's farm on lower Cowhouse Creek almost a full year after the war ended, having been left on the battlefield for dead and still suffering from a grievous injury that almost cost him his leg.<sup>3</sup> The Basham boys returned to their Pidcoke farm to find that Indians and horse thieves had stolen everything.<sup>4</sup> Samuel Bishop returned from the war to find that someone had stolen all his cattle, and the local preacher had defrauded his family of much-needed food. He swore to kill the men who robbed his family, but his wife talked him out of it.<sup>5</sup> "If there was ever a time when people had a right to give up and turn into a lawless element," said Clyde Bailey, "then this was the time."<sup>6</sup>

"I was just fourteen then," wrote J. M. Franks. "I could not understand or realize just how bad it was, but I knew it was bad enough."<sup>7</sup> Violent feuds, vigilantism, and a general increase in lawlessness replaced Indian attacks as the leading cause of sudden death on the frontier. After the Civil War ended, deserters, ruffians, and murderers migrated to frontier counties like Bell and Coryell, where law enforcement was somewhat disorganized. A group of men broke into the Morrell place, ten miles north of Gatesville on the Leon River, killing Lem Morrell in cold blood, then ransacking the house looking for gold. Some said they were Quantrill's men, others said they were Shelly men. "Shelly men would go into the stores, take whatever they wanted; go into the saloons, get whiskey, whoop and yell, and just do anything they pleased. There were no officers of the law, then, and if they had been what could they have done?"<sup>8</sup> Bell County fell victim to the Hasley-Early feud that created a no man's land northeast of the Griffinses' place near Little River Fort, interrupting traffic along the Little River Road between Cameron and Belton.<sup>9</sup> Feuds in upper Coryell County impacted Gatesville citizens, who felt compelled to choose sides. As during the Indian years, settlers took matters into their own hands, becoming vigilantes, forming mobs, and joining the latest incarnation of post-Civil War distress, the Ku Klux Klan. In 1874, a large group of vigilantes dragged eight horse thieves from their Bell County jail cells and shot them dead to prevent their compatriots from breaking them out of prison.<sup>10</sup> Military guards and Texas police tried to gain control during Reconstruction, but it took years before frontier violence finally lessened.

Chrisman tells of an old man and his two sons living along Cowhouse Creek who systematically stole horses from ranchers in western Coryell and Hamilton Counties, convincingly blaming the thefts on Indian raiders. Several years passed before the pattern of theft, the cries of Indian raids by that



Cattle trails  
from Texas to  
northern markets,  
1865-1876  
(adapted from  
Stephens and  
Holmes 1989).

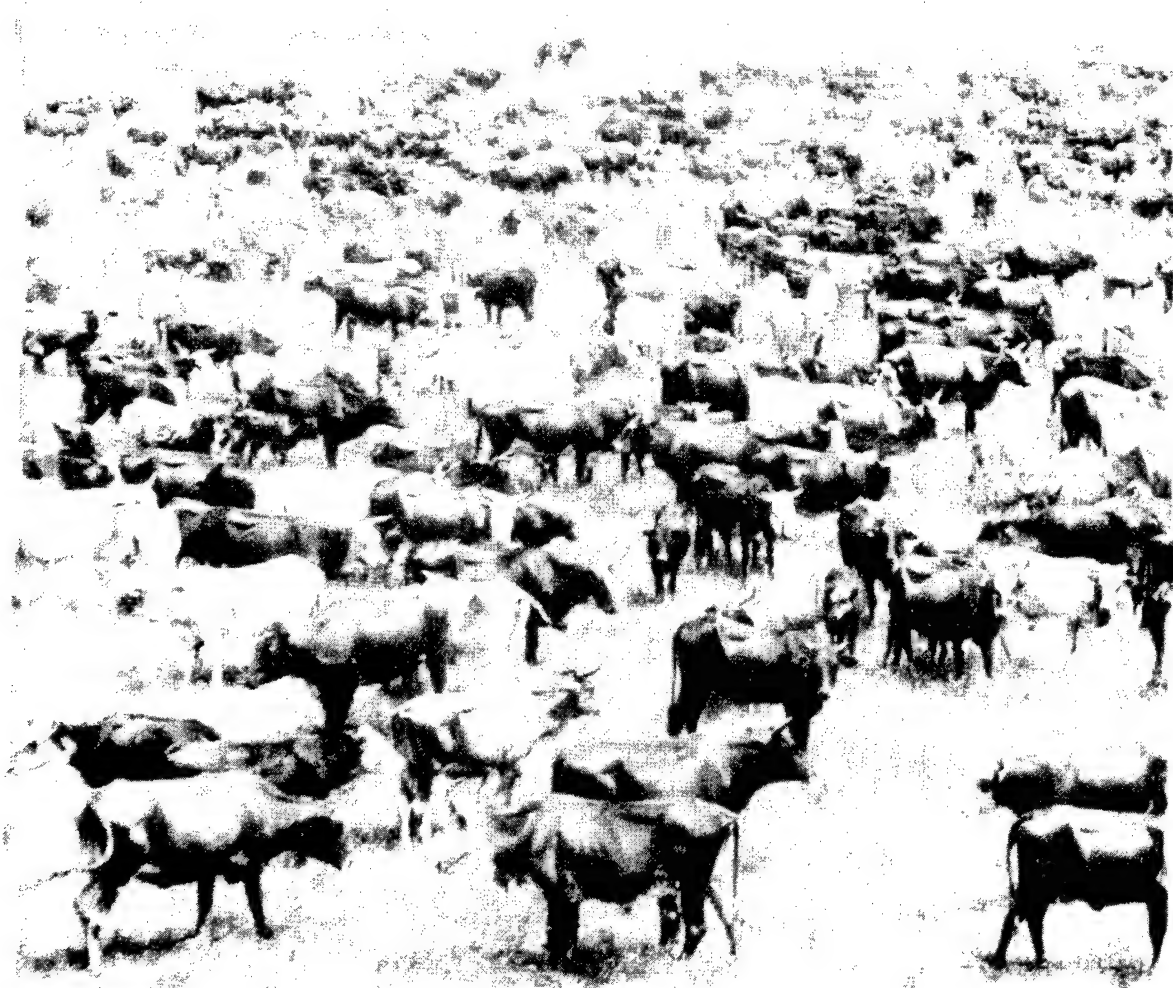
particular family, and other clues finally put the finger of suspicion where it belonged.<sup>11</sup> Sporadic Comanche raids continued for the first few years after the Civil War, but the return of federal troops, the large number of farmers who were former soldiers, and the establishment of Indian reservations on the upper Brazos soon put an end to the incursions. The last Indian fight in Coryell County took place in 1869, the last Indian raid in Bell County in 1870.<sup>12</sup>

## Cattle Country

As early as 1856, stockmen in Bell and Coryell Counties drove their cattle to New Orleans for shipment to East Coast cities. And they continued throughout the Civil War to move small numbers of cattle and horses to coastal ports as military demands and manpower allowed. But economic conditions supporting larger shipments did not occur until after the war. By then, the Union Army had reduced northwestern herds in states like Ohio and Indiana to the lowest level in years, while high prices and quick profits on grain sales pushed many of the small northern ranchers into farming.<sup>13</sup> Texas stood out as one of the few states with substantial cattle reserves. Like money in a forgotten bank account, free-range herds scattered

Herd of cattle in a field (PPC-Cattle and Cattle Industry, CN Number 02091,

The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).

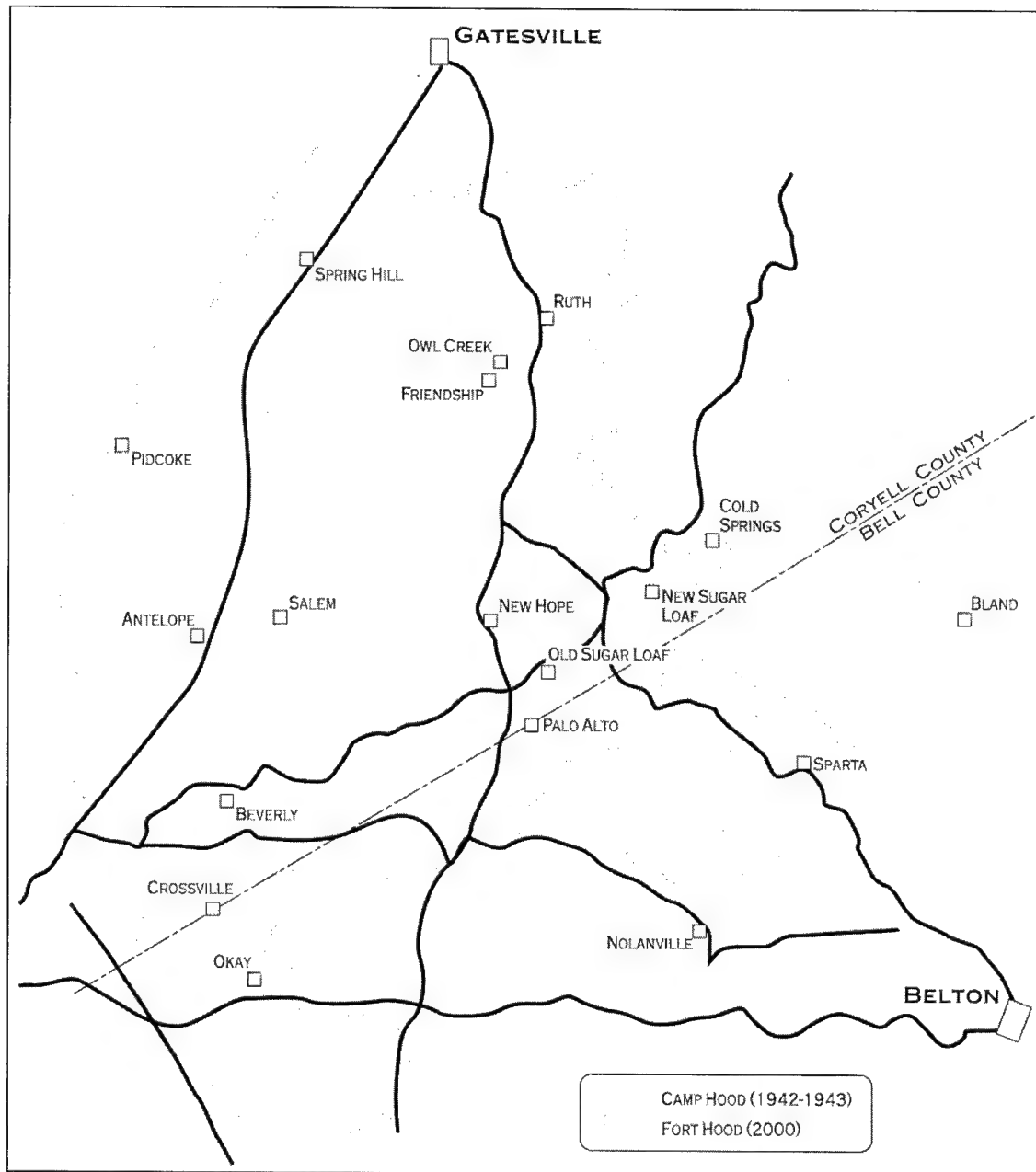


across fertile grasslands of the Grand Prairie and western Lampasas Cut Plain had doubled and tripled in size during the war years. By 1865, Texas cattle outnumbered Texas citizens six to one and sold for the bargain price of fifteen dollars a head. The same cow in Pennsylvania sold for fifty dollars. It didn't take a genius to see the potential bonanza.

The first cattle drive after the war took a southern route to Shreveport and New Orleans, but within a year, the route had shifted to the northern path, terminating at the Wichita railhead. This route became known as the Chisholm Trail. Following the old military road from San Antonio, the main path traversed Bell and McLennan Counties, crossing the Little River southeast of Belton and the Brazos River at Kimbell's Bend. By 1867, an estimated six thousand head of cattle from Coryell County made the journey to the Kansas market.<sup>14</sup> One of the largest cattle drives in the region took place in the spring of 1874, when ranchers, including several from Coryell County, assembled three thousand head of cattle on the Jackson ranch in McLennan County. W. A. Poage, father of Congressman Bob Poage, participated in the drive. Despite their success, most small stock raisers had a difficult time competing in the cattle business. One banker familiar with the situation said that the enormous ranches in south Texas were "better organized to sell and deliver large herds to northern buyers who visited Texas to make contracts" than the small cattlemen of Bell and Coryell Counties.<sup>15</sup>

For the first decade after the Civil War, the cattle industry was the only game in town. "It was the age of free grass...county boundaries were indefinite and almost unknown."<sup>16</sup> Some saw in this an opportunity for self-improvement. Settlers who had never purchased a cow before suddenly turned into cattle kings, with herds numbering in the hundreds.<sup>17</sup> Rounding up strays, marking them with newly created brands, and quickly marching them north for sale in Kansas put more than a few men on the road to riches. According to John Chrisman, three men in Hamilton County went so far as to create a brand that could obliterate every other cow brand. They tagged every beef they found, branded or not, creating an enormous herd from newborns, mavericks, and branded strays.<sup>18</sup> The county's first stockman's association was formed in Gatesville to address this problem.

All of the factors that had blocked settlement in the 1850s—Indian raids, the Pacific Railroad Reserve, and drought—were gone, as more and more newcomers arrived in Texas searching for a new beginning. By 1870, many Confederate veterans who had returned to devastated homes and farms in



Roads and settlements  
in the Camp Hood  
area before the arrival  
of the railroad,  
ca. 1880.

Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee followed the footsteps of those who returned to their Texas homes, as bison to a new field of grass. Stock raising also brought new families to western Bell and Coryell Counties. The Clements family moved from Sugar Loaf in search of good grazing land. Jesse M. Clements purchased the James George homestead (the George family was among the original settlers in the Cove area) and, in 1871, moved a large herd of cattle from east Texas. Within the decade, other stockmen had joined Clements—Joe Bullock, J. M. Smith, Newton Gilmore, Arthur Beverly, and a young H. K. Clem.<sup>19</sup>

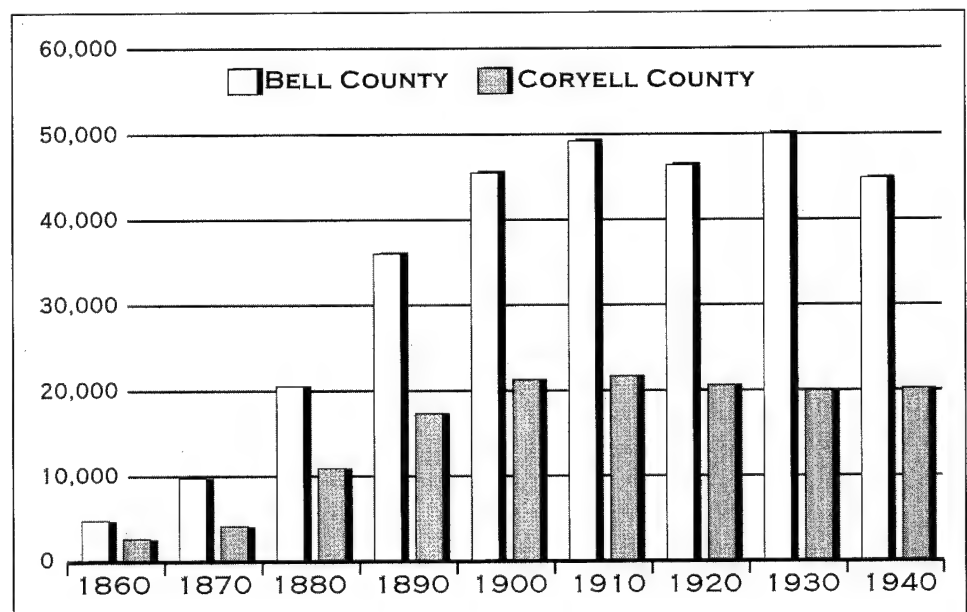
### Settling In, Expanding Out

Two new communities began on Camp Hood lands during the 1860s—Palo Alto south of old Sugar Loaf and New Hope to the northwest. Established in 1862, New Hope expressed the desires of those living on the bottomlands who had survived the drought and hoped to see a quick end to the Civil War. New Hope stood near the road from Gatesville to Sugar Loaf where it crossed the Cowhouse. The community of Palo Alto came into existence immediately after the war in 1865. It lay against the Bell County line less than a mile from Sugar Loaf, along the same road that serviced New Hope, Ruth, and Gatesville.

By 1870, there were almost double the number of residents in Bell and Coryell Counties as before the war. As surprising as this seemed, it was only the warm-up for a trend that continued over the next decade, during which the population in Coryell County swelled to 10,924, or two and a half times that of the previous decade and Bell County grew to 20,517, or twice that of 1870. This trend persisted, although at a more-moderate rate, until the 1890s, when population growth slowed noticeably.

Frontier towns increased in size and sophistication as new businesses responded to the demand for goods and services. Supplies came by way of

the Waco and Northwestern Railroad, which was completed to Waco from its junction with the Houston and Texas Central Railway at Bremond in September 1872.<sup>20</sup> New stores opened in Belton and Gatesville, as well as in smaller towns surrounding the Camp Hood lands. Gatesville and Belton had competing newspapers. Lumberyards and sawmills appeared in far corners of the region. Residents along Cowhouse Creek got their first grist mill after the Civil War, when Major Rose built a flour mill near the mouth of Taylor's Branch using a boiler taken from a sunken steamship.<sup>21</sup>



Population growth in Bell and Coryell Counties, 1860-1940.



The post-Civil War boom also brought new roads and trails. Stagecoach lines connected outlying communities in Bell and Coryell Counties with those along the main route from Austin to Waco, the old Military Road. One route went west from Waco to Gatesville, then swung in a large arch toward the southwest, passing through Pidcoke and the Cove area before swinging back to the southeast into Georgetown. A second stage route shot due west out of Belton, passing over the flatlands south of Nolan Creek, through Ivy Gap in Seven Mile Mountain, then swinging north to Cove before turning west toward Lampasas. Cove stood at the crossroads, and Marsden Ogletree, then in his late fifties, seized on the economic advantage of this location. He built a two-story limestone house at the junction of the two stagecoach routes to serve as his family home, general store, and, he hoped, a post office for Cove, Texas. Unfortunately, another town already had claimed the name, so Ogletree resubmitted his application under "Coperas Cove" because the local water tasted of copper (the second "p"—for Coperas—was added in 1901 to aid in pronunciation). His application was approved in March 1879.

Increased numbers of ranchers and cowhands gave local farmers a constant market for their farm products, with corn and wheat topping the list.<sup>22</sup> Favorable weather conditions in the early 1870s permitted experimentation with crops previously considered too risky. For example, cotton, once restricted to fertile Blackland soils, advanced into Camp Hood lands. Farmers along Cowhouse Creek found it more profitable to grow than wheat. Over the next decade, cotton slowly became the dominant cash crop across the region. Indeed, wheat would not return as a cash crop until after the cotton crash of the 1920s.<sup>23</sup> Other experimental crops grown in the 1870s included oats, rye, and hay. A growing diversity of fruits and vegetables, such as sweet potatoes and beans, appeared in truck gardens throughout the region.

Despite all this activity, dozens of surveys remained unpatented, unclaimed, and unsettled in the years after Texas had stopped distributing headrights and bounty and donation grants. This pattern changed after 1870, when the government offered homestead grants of 160 acres for families willing to inhabit and improve land for three years, and extended the offer to include anyone who already occupied unclaimed lands. Over the next decade, thousands of homesteaders received clear title to land in Texas, two hundred within the Camp Hood perimeter alone.

Surveys completed in the 1870s spread uniformly throughout Camp Hood lands, creating a different pattern of ownership. None of the new surveys

were together in a specific region, but more significantly, few were located along the major creeks and streams. Instead, surveyors exploited the intermediate and upland areas, which held less water but might still provide good pasturage. One of the last places to receive much attention from surveyors was the "pear-stem" portion of the Camp Hood lands. Almost a third of the stem is taken by Seven Mile Mountain, shaped like a two capital Es stacked on top of each other and, in truth, only about five miles long. Strangely, both the east and west sides of the mountain shelter creeks named for their clear water, one stream flowing north and the other south. Near the headwaters of the eastern Clear Creek lay the community of Okay, settled in 1874. Today, the north end of Gray Army Airfield stops close to the old town site. The western Clear Creek flows out of present-day Copperas Cove and empties into the Lampasas River to the south.

Northeast of Okay along the Bell County line was the community of Crossville, established in 1872. The town relied on water running in a small branch of the eastern Clear Creek and provided west-bound travelers from Nolanville a place to rest before they headed through Ivy Gap on the south end of Seven Mile Mountain. Crossville also provided area farmers with a general store, grist mill, gin, and one-room school. Four miles north of Crossville, in intermediate lands just below Latham Prairie, stood the community of Beverly. Established in 1875 and named after a prominent ranching family, Beverly stood on the Belton to Lampasas road. When the railroads arrived in the early 1880s, Beverly and Crossville both closed down and many businesses reopened in the town of Copperas Cove.

In 1870, the Henson Mountains area gained its third town<sup>24</sup> when settlers started the community of Friendship less than one mile south of the Owl Creek community. And when businesses in Sugar Loaf decided in 1874 to move their town to a better location, they rebuilt it four miles to the northeast, away from the unreliable waters of Oak Branch and well within the Cowhouse Creek bottomlands. One year later, the far western region first settled by holdovers from the failed English venture became the town of Pidcoke, variously spelled Pidcock and Pidcoe. Of all the towns begun in the 1870s, Pidcoke is the only one still in existence.

By 1880, farms had surpassed subsistence levels and advanced to producing cash crops.<sup>25</sup> The influx of agricultural interests in the 1870s spurred the creation of a number of groups and associations designed to assist and protect farming interests. Patrons of Husbandry, or the Grange, as it was known,

was the first of these groups; locally, the group formed at Salado in Bell County around July 1873. In addition to being an important social organization, the Grange had a political agenda, advocating homestead protection, regulation of railroads, restrictions on taxing powers, lower interest rates, and restraints on speculation. The Grange also established cooperative purchasing ventures to help farmers reduce the costs of farm supplies and equipment. A second farm organization grew out of the particular needs of farmers in the Grand Prairie region. Established in Lampasas sometime around 1876, the Farmers Alliance offered protection for those who suffered harassment from ranchers or other persons who wished to prevent "further settlement of the country."<sup>26</sup> Alliance clubs sought to improve the conditions of farmers by offering "a feeling of community to isolated farm families" and exercising political muscle through initiatives of the Greenback Party (and later, the People's Party). William T. Baggett organized several lodges in Coryell and Hamilton Counties.

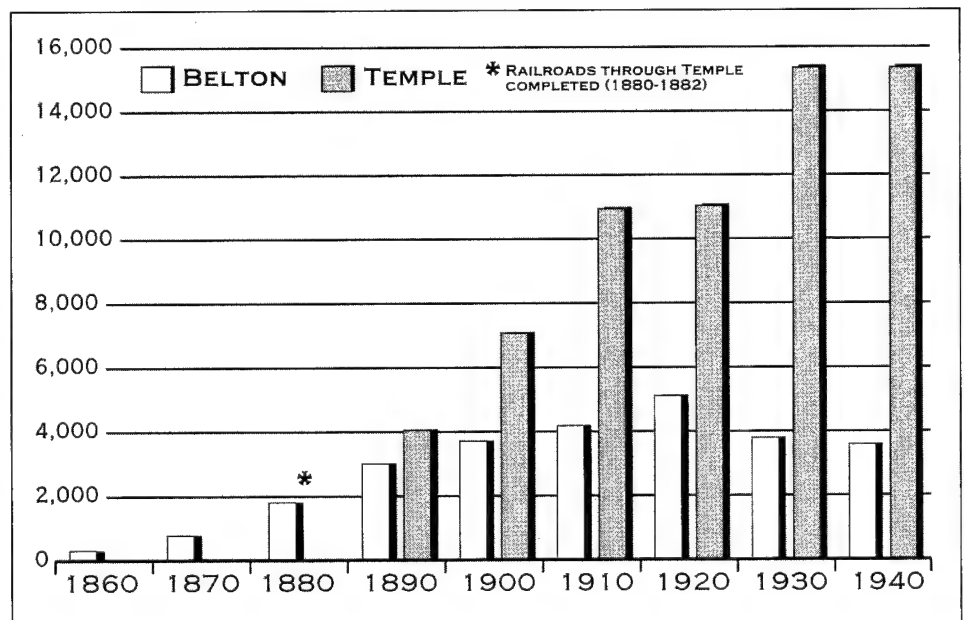
### **The Railroad Era: Transportation and Innovation**

As important as other changes were to the development of Bell and Coryell Counties, nothing came close to the impact of the railroads. As the railroads stretched across the western states, people saw that they could crush well-established communities or create new ones overnight. The lucky towns lay in line with the approaching railroad; the unlucky ones either had to relocate or compete with the new railroad town that sprang up a few miles away. But in reality, luck had nothing to do with it. This was very much the case for the first railroad in the area, the one supposed to go through Belton. When the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe line<sup>27</sup> reached eastern Bell County in 1880, Belton city leaders yielded to the beleaguered rail company and scraped together \$75,000 and all the right of way needed to cross the county via Belton. Without this help from the city, railroad executives claimed the railroad could not afford to expand into Bell County. But with cash securely in hand, company executives rerouted the line from another direction, crossed Belton north of the city limits, and established an entirely new town ten miles away, naming it after Bernard Moore Temple, the engineer who laid out the path. Belton cried fraud, the railroad demurred, and the resulting lawsuit dragged through the courts for years.<sup>28</sup>

The Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe line followed North Nolan Creek west, crossing near the community of Palo Alto. The railroad built the town of Killeen from scratch and named it after a railroad official, in much the same way they had Temple. Decades later, Mrs. Winifred Bell recalled her father sitting on a hillside overlooking Killeen, describing things as they were in the early 1880s. Before the railroad came, he said, Maxdale was the biggest town in the area. It had a gin, a store, a post office, and a doctor. "Maxdale was bigger than Killeen; Killeen was nothing . . . Killeen had nothing."<sup>29</sup> Within a few years Maxdale declined, as did Salado and Moffat on the old Military Road, while towns along the railroad prospered.

The Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe came to Copperas Cove because Jesse Clements offered to deed the right of way across his property to the railroad for a paltry sum, plus "benefits"—benefits that would accrue to Clements from having a railhead in his backyard. As the construction neared Clements's property in April 1882, the company executives returned, asking for double the right of way to two hundred feet, plus twenty acres for a depot. Clements agreed to the increase, provided the train would make this depot a regular stop for the next three years. With the papers signed, Ogletree was persuaded to move the Copperas Cove post office to the new depot, creating the locus around which a larger community was formed. The following year, Jesse Clements donated land for a school and church, then opened a general store to be run by a relative, J. S. Clements.<sup>30</sup> In his later years, Jesse Clements moved to the valley where the town once sat, living in Ogletree's stone home and former stage-coach stop.

By 1893, Copperas Cove stood at the crossroads of stage and rail, attracting new businesses to the town. Cotton had gained in importance as a cash crop, and H. K. Clem had constructed a cotton gin on his farm three miles north of town. When Copperas Cove moved to the



Population growth of Belton and Temple.

# CHURCHES

All farm chores and housework stopped on Sunday mornings to allow time for church, even in the midst of harvest time. "Our social life centered around the church," recalled Mrs. Winifred Bell. "We had two churches out here. We had a Methodist Church and a Baptist Church. And everybody went to both churches; we alternated Sunday's services. The

go to church as much as some people did, 'cause we lived four miles from a church. . . . We lived off on a ranch, and sometimes we'd work on Sunday if we needed to work on Sunday, we'd just work and work and work, you know."<sup>2</sup>

Church membership generally cut across community lines, drawing members from several school district communities, and in every

community there were some who attended church in another district, often at a great distance. "At Antelope, they had a Baptist Church on the grounds close to the school," said Hazel Graham Wilkinson. This was the same school Mrs. Wilkinson attended as a child,



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

Methodist Church would have a minister one Sunday, the Baptist Church the next. It didn't matter what denomination you went to, belong to, you attended the services."<sup>1</sup>

Barney Duncan said his family wasn't much for church going, "Well . . . I'se always Baptist. I never have—my parents and myself, I wasn't raised necessarily with very strong religious beliefs, you know." He continued, "We didn't

but her family attended the Eliga Church of Christ near Eliga. "(N)ear Eliga was a Free Will church. My uncle . . . preached there, and that's where we had a lot of the singings on Sunday afternoon, Sunday night."<sup>3</sup>

Baptist churches were the most numerous in Bell County and in general among rural people, and were organized on a county basis. In the opening years of the twentieth century,

Methodists began losing ground to a growing proliferation of Baptist churches, leading one Methodist preacher to lament, "The Baptists are spreading like Johnson grass."<sup>4</sup>

The rural churches found it hard to hold their more-able preachers. One observer noted, "rural preachers were either young fellows trying to get up to the city, or else elderly men on the way down."<sup>5</sup>

The family meal after church on Sunday was special. It usually consisted of ham or roast, mashed potatoes, corn bread or corn pudding, vegetables from the garden, fruit cobbler or pies, and homemade ice cream.<sup>6</sup>

Singing conventions were another popular activity on Sunday afternoons. Quartets from Sparta and neighboring communities would perform during picnics. On some Sundays in the summer, families would gather on the church grounds and play baseball with teams from neighboring towns.<sup>7</sup>

"(M)y dad liked to sing," remembered Mrs. Wilkinson. "The Grahams had a nice quartet that he sang bass in. They were well known in the area for singing. . . . The group was known as the Graham quartet. They sang in Coryell County. We'd have singing conventions and they'd go to singing conventions around. They did shaped note singing. My cousin, dad's nephew, taught singing in school and taught music."<sup>8</sup>

"(I)n the summer we had revival meetings," Mrs. Bell remembered. "The men would take off a day and build a brush arbor. They would put up cedar posts and cover it with cedar cuttings. And we had kerosene lanterns. This was outside and I guess the brush arbor, it seemed large then, but I guess it was approximately 40 feet square. And a minister would come in, have services at ten o'clock in the morning, and everybody would work in the fields 'til nine, and then went home, took a bath . . . and went to church Sunday mor(ni)ng at ten o'clock, and then back at night. And this usually lasted for two weeks and it was the social event of the year. And it was climaxed by a baptizing on the river on the Sunday afternoon on the last day of the meeting. And people for miles around would come to the baptizings on the banks of the river(.) (I)f it was a Methodist revival, we use a different method of baptism, not immersion. The baptism, the last day of the meeting of course, was a big event and this was not something new. This had been going on for 50 years. I have a picture of a baptizing in the Lampasas River here back in the 1800's. And there must have been two or three hundred people there. And they immersed them in the middle of the river."<sup>9</sup>

railhead, Clem started a second gin, this one in town; three years later Clem and his partner, Joe Dunsmore, built a general store, one of the first stone buildings in town.<sup>31</sup> At the close of each year, Clem made entries in his account ledger for the gin and the store, summarizing business conditions, weather, and economic forecasts. His comments offer historians pithy insights into the conditions that impacted the western region of the Camp Hood lands.

The second railroad to cross the area was the "Katy" line, officially known as the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad (MKT). Building south from Waco, the MKT Railroad chose to intersect the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe at Temple, slighting Belton for the second time in less than a year. However, when Katy executives offered to build a spur line between Temple and Belton, one that actually went through the center of town, city leaders snapped at the opportunity, ponied up the required \$30,000, and signed what must have been the most carefully scrutinized contract in county history. In September 1882, they welcomed the first Katy engine into their new railroad station, just three blocks from the courthouse.

By this time, Belton residents were probably glad they had lost the contest for the railroad crossroads. Temple had quickly acquired a reputation as a boisterous, hard-drinking town overrun with rowdy railroad crews. Locals nicknamed their town Tanglefoot, because few could walk a straight and steady line. This didn't last long, of course, and soon Temple could boast newspapers, hotels, churches, and other amenities of a prosperous and civilized community. Within a few years, the economic advantages were self-evident. Temple surpassed Belton as the trade center for southern Bell County. The low-water crossing that made Belton the ideal location in the pioneer days had been superseded by the flat, treeless prairie as the ideal crossing for two railroads.

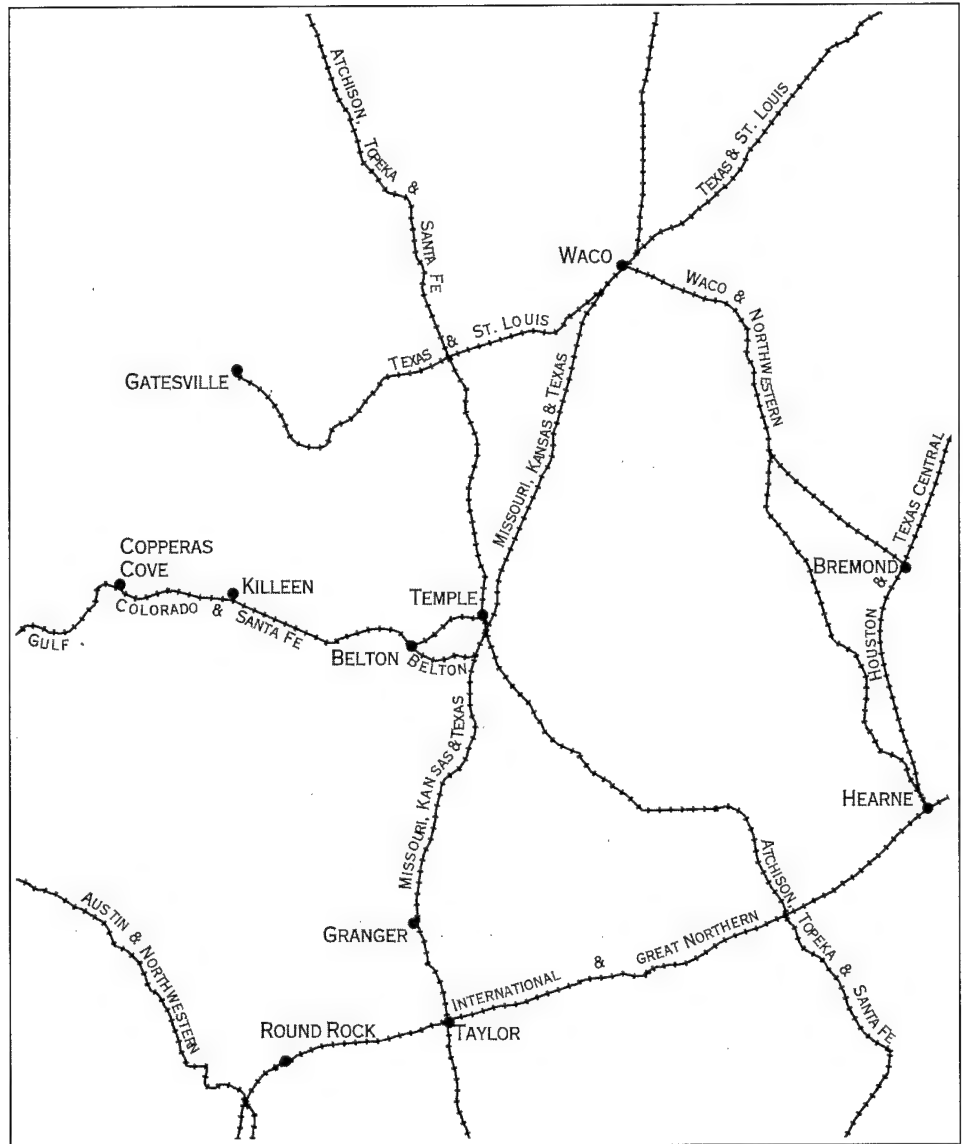
Meanwhile, in central Coryell County, the Texas and St. Louis Railroad (originally called the Tyler Tap Railroad) commenced construction of a line that would connect Laredo with St. Louis through Tyler. By October 1882, one month after the Katy line reached Temple, the Texas and St. Louis line arrived in Gatesville. Unfortunately, the decision to make it narrow gauge hampered the company's ability to connect with the network of standardized railroads in Texas. Shipments arriving on the Katy line had to be hand-carried into the narrow-gauge box cars of the Texas and St. Louis line. The company went bankrupt in 1886 and was acquired by the St. Louis, Arkansas



and Texas Railroad, which set about standardizing all of its newly acquired Texas rails. The expensive conversion weakened the company's stock position, and over the next few years it changed hands several times. The St. Louis Southwestern Railroad company picked up the struggling line in 1891 and joined it to the network that crossed the Blackland Prairie, the heartland of Texas cotton, acquiring the name "Cotton Belt" line.

Railroads not only altered the locations of towns, they rerouted all other forms of ground transportation. County precincts cut new paths to the nearest railhead,

long-neglected roadways gained renewed importance if they provided farmers with convenient access to railroad loading docks, and once-popular wagon routes declined in use if they only led to towns sidestepped by the railroads. Farmers in central Coryell County still turned to Gatesville as the best shipping point, while those in the far northern corner preferred Clifton, the Santa Fe junction twenty miles north in Bosque County. Those in western Coryell County turned away from Gatesville, choosing the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe railhead at Copperas Cove instead. In the past, when travel was more difficult and Gatesville and Belton were the largest towns in the area, the choices were simple, if restricted. By the 1880s, farmers living within what would later become Camp Hood had a number of choices. They could head north to Gatesville, southwest to Copperas Cove, due south to



Railroads in the Bell-Coryell County area, 1865-1890.



Killeen, or southeast to Belton or Temple. Not until paved roads and highways supplanted dirt and gravel roads in the late 1930s would there be another such profound impact on transportation.

Rail lines crisscrossed the old Chisholm Trail with a network of routes that stretched from Galveston to El Paso and up through Dallas, serving cities and towns throughout central Texas. Nevertheless, some ranchers in Coryell County still found it cheaper to drive herds to Kansas or Fort Worth along west Texas trails than to ship them from depots that were ten miles away.<sup>32</sup> But the days of cattle drives were waning. Even in its heyday, the cattle industry in Bell and Coryell Counties was of limited importance compared to the cattle barons of west Texas and the Coastal Plain. In the 1870s, for example, only nine herds on Camp Hood lands were larger than 200 head. Only three of those numbered more than 500, while many stockmen raised an average of between 40 and 100 head. Most of the ranching activity shifted to western Cowhouse Creek and the region between Killeen and Copperas Cove. While newcomers to Coryell County purchased herds for the first time in the 1880s, many stockmen dropped out of cattle altogether or reduced their herds.

The days of long-distance cattle drives ended for good in the late 1880s, when barbed-wire fences blocked the pathways north. Invented in 1878 and available in large quantities at Galveston wharves the following year, barbed wire initially made little impact on the tenuous coexistence of ranching and farming that began after the Civil War. Sufficient quantity of wire to effectively enclose a medium-sized farm might fill several wagons and strain the capacity of most rigs to carry it over the difficult terrain from Waco or Brenham, the nearest railheads. This made barbed wire expensive, and the combined freight costs for rail and wagon were more than most new farmers could afford. For the most part, the old-timers had already fenced their lots with cedar rails. But when railroads began delivering barbed wire to local stores in 1883, transportation costs dropped and suddenly wire came within reach of the lowliest farmer. Railroads also brought post augers advertised to bore a hole two feet deep "in the hardest possible dirt and gravel in two minutes." Merchants like McBeth and Kinsolving promoted barbed wire, reporters for the *Gatesville Sun* talked about it, and soon every farmer wanted to secure his property with wire fencing.<sup>33</sup>

In the early days of barbed wire, disputes arose because overzealous farmers sometimes enclosed their entire property, heedless of public roads and

streams that had served cattlemen since they first arrived. Such indiscriminant use of the product caused several fatal arguments in Lampasas and other western counties. Ranchers disliked barbed wire on principle. One of the first people to string barbed wire in the Killeen area, Mr. K. L. "Lod" Fry, would have lost his life had it not been for the timely arrival of Mrs. Fry, armed with a loaded shotgun; she cancelled the scheduled lynching and sent the trespassers homeward.<sup>34</sup> In the mid-1880s, John Pace of Pilot Knob, a stalwart character, stretched fencing through a popular assembly point for northward cattle drives. Despite numerous threats, Pace gave ground to no one.

"Let us pay tribute to barbed wire fence," declared Frank E. Simmons, "for it brought law and order."<sup>35</sup> The large-scale use of those prickly metal strands curtailed the lawlessness that fed off the cattle industry. With the rise of large cattle herds, petty thuggery and cattle rustling that immediately followed the Civil War soon turned into systematic thievery. "Farmers who turned their calves out at night to grass often found them bearing a neighbor's brand the next morning. The big cow outfits were particularly industrious in this unethical practice."<sup>36</sup> But with barbed wire, the small farmer or stockman could afford to protect his few head of cattle. Although rustlers still cut fences, such tactics made their direction of escape apparent; moreover, fence-cutting was a felony in Texas. And once wire fencing came into general use, thieves were forced to lead their stolen herds down public roads and common pathways, which aided in their apprehension.

Another piece of equipment that both ranchers and farmers valued was the wind-driven water pump. Experimentation with water pumps began in water-parched west Texas and the Hill Country in the late 1870s, and within a decade, ads for Champion Windmill ran alongside those for barbed wire.<sup>37</sup> This one device released both farmer and rancher from the vagaries of ground water, of streams and creeks drained to dust in hard summers; it circumvented restrictions to access imposed by ownership, geography, and the new-fangled barbed wire; and it overstepped any production limitations imposed by a shortage of available creek water. It also opened marginal lands to productive use for the first time. Cattle drank on waterless highlands, tenant farmers raised passable crops on outlying lands, and intermediate soils lying between the rich bottomlands and limestone hilltops held out promise of agricultural success.

# RANCH WORK

"As soon as we were big enough to ride a horse, he put us on the horse, and we went up to the ranch land and helped with the cattle and the goats and the sheep—had to ride the fence to see that it was up, and they couldn't get out, and we had . . . to look for screw worms. If they got a scratch, well, those blow flies would blow eggs on it and it would hatch into worms, and you had to watch for that, because if they got worms, we had to doctor it with—oh, well,

you had to carry a bottle of it with you, and you had to pour it on the sore, you know, to kill the worms."<sup>1</sup>

"Dick was a special cowpony," remembered Molly Duncan. "My dad trained him . . . to get the cows off the mountain and out of the woods, and he had a dog named Fritz that he trained, too. And Fritz would go into the brush and bring the cows out, and then Dick would take them off of the mountain . . ."<sup>2</sup>



Colloghan Ranch Photo Album-1930s, CN Number 10568, the Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin

"Sheep were a no-no in . . . ranching for long time," Mary Edwards Groves recalled. And her sister, Hope Edwards Turner, added, "A farmer that had cattle didn't like sheep, because sheep eat grass closer to the ground."<sup>3</sup>

Barney Duncan explained, "For a long time, you had problems fencing for goats and sheep, see, because you have to have a good fence for goats, or they'd crawl in it and another thing goats do, they'll stick their head into a place and can't—they got horns and they can't get out. So he'll just die, you know, if you don't come along and get 'em(,) so you had to be looking out all the time for goats that were hung up."<sup>4</sup>

"You sometimes had to have a shed, you know, because the sheep and goats, and especially if you she(a)red the mohair off the goats, it'd come a rain and got cold, they'd just freeze to death, 'cause that mohair is what

keeps them going. And you could do the same thing with sheep, you could lose a lot of sheep if you she(a)red 'em. We usually didn't she(a)r them until it was warm enough, til we felt like for she(a)ring it was warm enough, then we'd she(a)r off the wool, see, and they'd be able to make it all right, then. . . . (G)oats just couldn't make it (through cold weather). We lost a good many goats. We'd she(a)r them things, then we'd come a norther, and then the next morning, there'd be several of them that just couldn't get up, they'd be just shakin' . . ."<sup>5</sup>

"You had to get their hair clean . . . before you got it off the goats, 'cause if you got, say a one that had been in the hore-hound, like, where they had all kinds of little grass burrs in it, and all that, why, they'd dock you, and you know, we'd have to pick that out . . . otherwise we'd be docked on the price so much."<sup>6</sup>

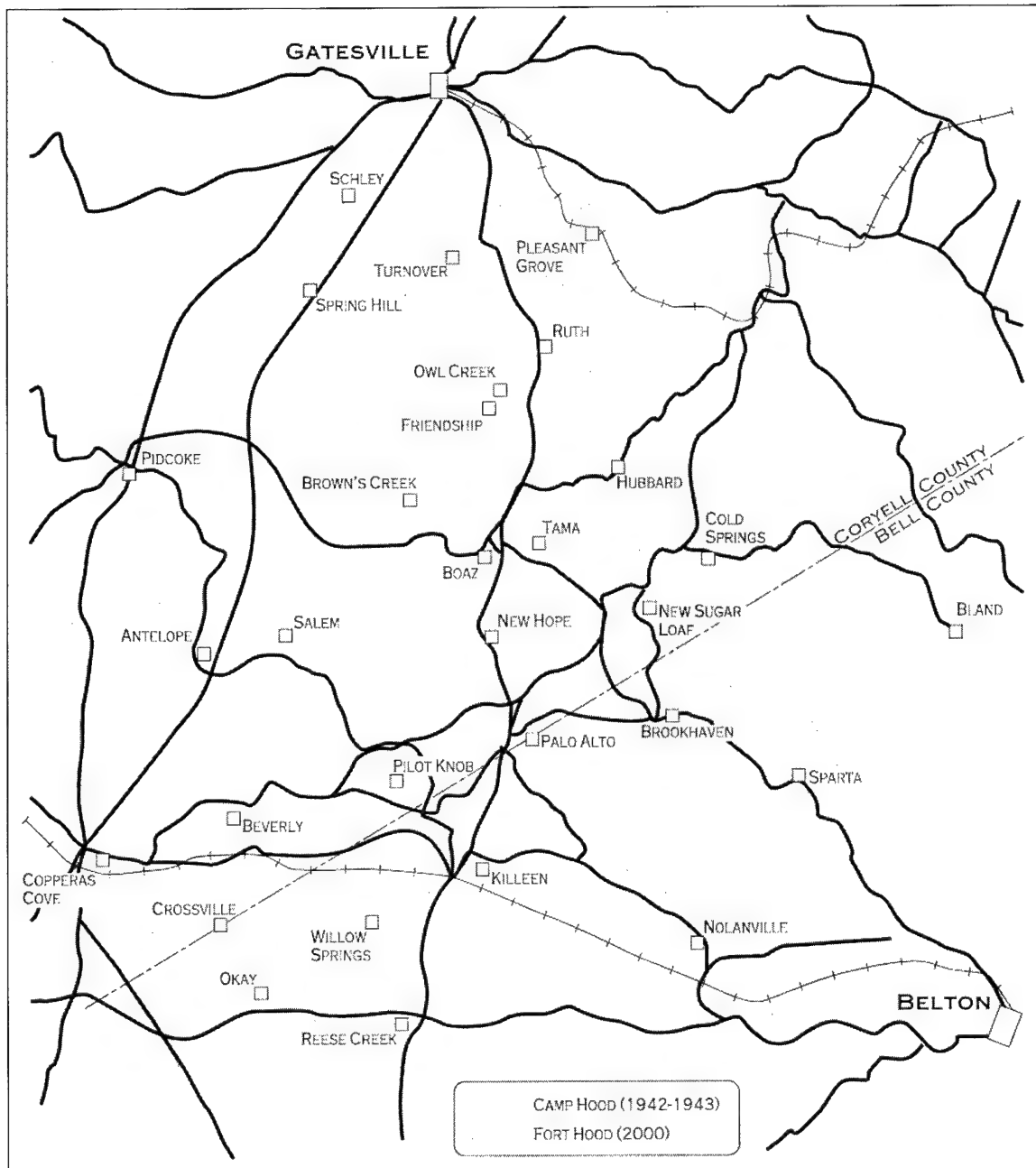


Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

Sheep moved north into the limestone hills of the Edwards Plateau as early on the 1850s and 1860s, but in the years immediately following the Civil War, there were few sheep men and the largest operators rarely owned more than 250 animals. After the early 1880s, however, more ranchers took up sheep raising. Many owned over 500 head, several had 1,000, and a handful ran flocks in excess of that. "Sheep raising is fast becoming the leading industry in Coryell County" announced the *Gatesville Sun* in 1884.<sup>38</sup> The region was "particularly adapted to sheep," leading some to predict that Coryell County would become one of the largest wool-producing counties in the state. Outside Maverick County on the Rio Grande, Bell and Coryell Counties ranked among the top three regions for sheep raising in the state. The majority of flocks grazed along a north-south band extending from Gatesville to Killeen, with concentrations along eastern Cowhouse Creek between Pilot Knob and Palo Alto.

Despite the auspicious beginnings, sheep did not fare well, mainly due to the weather. The mid-1880s produced some of the most devastating weather events in the nation's history. Crippling droughts returned to much of Texas between 1884 and 1887—droughts that only the new-fangled windmills kept from becoming a total disaster. Then came the winters. The freeze of 1885–1886 smashed the citrus industry in northern Florida, the blizzard of 1886–1887 wiped out Texas cattle by the tens of thousands, and the snow storm of March 1888 killed four hundred people in New York City. Sheep, more vulnerable than cattle, did not respond well to the extreme fluctuations. What the drought weakened, the blizzard killed, and the few sheep that survived lost value in the face of high imports and low tariffs for wool. Flocks dropped in size by 33 percent toward the late 1880s and never fully regained their previous dominance. For all that, statistics for 1890 still showed the northern corner of Coryell County with the highest concentration of sheep in Texas. Sheep would remain a permanent and durable aspect of a diversified ranching operation.

Aside from bringing barbed-wire civilization to the western frontier, the railroads removed the last barrier to farm productivity. Farm income could never reach much beyond subsistence levels as long as transportation costs made seed and supplies prohibitively expensive, at the same time making western farm products too costly for eastern consumers. For all the barking about high tariffs, rates, and monopolies, the railroads, even the most profiteering ones, still reduced a farmer's transportation costs to half (and



often far less) what he had paid thirty years before. A single train in 1885 could carry the same quantity of goods and products to Gatesville or Copperas Cove that a whole string of wagons would take two months or more to haul from Houston in 1855.<sup>39</sup> Prices for standard commodities—such as beans, coffee, sugar, salt, and gunpowder—dropped considerably with the arrival of the railroads. Catalog sales companies like Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward boomed as never before, as trains carried everything from cast iron stoves to pianos direct to the farmer. Moreover, railroads gave a subtle advantage to those who farmed over those who ranched. Every invention born of this

Roads, settlements, and railroads in the Camp Hood area, ca. 1885.

industrial age, every device made to lighten the farmer's workload, arrived by rail—new riding plows, double-row planters, water pumps, diskers, harvesters, and later, even tractors. Thus, the farmer gained efficiency over the stockman, who needed pasture more than equipment.

Proximity of railroads in the 1880s brought together all the elements of success—new markets, new equipment, and a new sense of social stability. And with this long-awaited development came a spurt in population growth that rivaled the post-Civil War boom. The 1880s witnessed thirteen new communities established on Camp Hood grounds, the largest number in a single decade. Three towns arose near the center of Camp Hood lands: Brown's Creek (1882), Boaz (1885), and Tama (1886). Each had a school and church and stood near roads that could conveniently carry goods and supplies to either Gatesville or Killeen. Boaz and Tama offered customers the additional services of a general store, blacksmith, and gin. Though less than three miles apart, on either side of Wolf Creek, the two towns were far enough away from the railheads to avoid more-effective "big city" competition. Tama and Boaz closed only after the Army arrived. The communities of Schley (1882), Turnover (1883), and Pleasant Grove (1883) lined up along the northern boundary of Camp Hood lands, about five miles away from Gatesville, the railhead for shipments on the "Cotton Belt" rail line. Five miles away marked the minimum distance a town could reasonably hope to exist without losing customers and businesses to a railhead city, a lesson challenged by the founders of Pilot Knob, who set up shop in 1886 only three miles north of Killeen beneath the shadow of the Blackwell Mountains. They did this at the same time businessmen in nearby Palo Alto were moving their shops a full five miles to catch new customers in Killeen. Pilot Knob held out for two decades, keeping its customer base and small-town atmosphere.

Railroads, wire fences, and water pumps ushered in the next phase of agricultural development for Bell and Coryell Counties—cotton. As production and transportation improved, growing food crops for subsistence and barter became less and less necessary, and cotton supplanted corn and wheat as the cash crop in central Texas. With the decline of Mississippi plantations after the Civil War, cotton moved west on the heels of the cattle industry, and farmers discovered cotton's most productive soils ever in the sticky soils of the Blackland Prairie. By the 1870s, Texas had moved to third place in cotton production nationwide, and ambitious farmers increasingly sought new lands upon which to sow the lucrative commodity.<sup>40</sup>

With the sheep and cattle industries on the wane, there was but one hope left for a cash bonanza. The lure of cotton profits brought more Camp Hood acreage under cultivation, and cotton farmers grew addicted to the product. Many called it King Cotton, but in the coming years, some would say it was more the Joker.



- 1890 Temple signs contract for electric power and lights (October)  
Belton digs artesian wells for water supply  
Sherman Silver Act passed
- 1891 Discovery of Cripple Creek gold mines  
Belton starts First Monday county fair  
Populist Party established in Cincinnati, Ohio (May 19)
- 1892 Silver discovered in Colorado
- 1893 Indian lands in Oklahoma opened to white settlement  
Killeen charter forms first city government  
Stock market crash (April)  
Record drought in central Texas (Summer)
- 1894 Texas Railroad Commission formed  
Tariff on wool removed, prices slump  
Spanish-American War begins (April 24)  
Five-year depression ends
- 1900 Fire sweeps through Copperas Cove downtown  
Hurricane destroys Galveston (September 8)
- 1901 Spindletop discovery begins oil boom in southeast Texas (January 10)  
Cotton mill opens in Belton
- 1904 Boll weevil arrives in Bell and Coryell Counties
- 1905 National Good Roads Association meets in Temple (February)
- 1906 Antiquities Act passes Congress
- 1907 Stock market takes another dive (March 13)
- 1910 Coryell County has seventy-five miles of graveled roads
- 1913 Woodrow Wilson inaugurated as first Democratic president in twenty years (March 4)
- 1916 Federal aid improves roads used for postal routes
- 1917 United States enters war in Europe (April 2)  
Worst one-year drought for Texas in two decades
- 1918 World War I ends
- 1920 Cotton prices collapse

# HIGH COTTON TIMES

## 1890-1920

7

### Rural Communities on Camp Hood Lands

**T**he enormous changes that took place in Bell and Coryell Counties before 1890 give one the impression that more happened in the first fifty years of settlement than in the next. In truth, the next half century of farm life was every bit as busy and full of change as those early years. It is just that the sensation of change in the early years was based on the enormous number of "firsts"—the first inhabitants, the first permanent towns, the first roads, the first settlers, the first railroads, and the list goes on and on. By the 1890s, the settlement of Euro-Americans was complete: the new inhabitants had arrived, occupied land, and adjusted to their surroundings as one settles into a chair.

By 1890, numerous communities on Camp Hood lands had been established and the roads linking those communities, schools, and churches built. But most importantly, people had constructed their economic foundation. It took several decades, but the varied terrain of the Lampasas Cut Plain eventually molded a diversified economy based upon measured amounts of stock raising and farm cultivation. And the community at large continued with its religious and social traditions, its educational endeavors, its mutual assistance, trust, and goodheartedness that sealed the hard work like mortar in a brick wall. In the coming decades, changes within this rural society occurred as the floodwaters of modernity, technology, and urbanization swept around the Camp Hood lands.

Let us for a moment consider the specific nature of this established lifestyle. For the rancher, the economy rested upon three groups of animals: cattle, sheep and goats, and horses. Barbed wire constrained the numbers of free-range cattle, just as the 1880s blizzards culled the flocks of sheep and goats. Cattle stood on pretty much the same footing as their shorter

competitors, each exploiting a niche in the Lampasas Cut Plains grasslands, with no one species dominating the marketplace. Although in raw figures, sheep usually outnumbered cattle eight to one, that was only because the same acreage could sustain six to eight times the number of sheep as cattle. Most cattle were raised for their beef and hides. Sheep, on the other hand, were raised primarily for wool, not mutton. Angora goats were valued for their mohair. Horses never recovered their importance after the Civil War, but they, along with mules, formed a specialty category of sorts and were sold primarily to local farmers for work in the fields and for transportation.

Ranch work revolved around the spring roundups, when calves were branded, and autumn auctions after the cattle had fattened on spring and summer grasses. The rest of the year, the ranch hand mended fences, repaired windmills, spread feed during the winter and in times of drought, and assisted in difficult calving. Shepherds gave their flocks seasonal dippings to remove parasites buried in the wool. Wool shearing took place in April and again in September, though some ranchers thought the second shearing required too much work and posed an unnecessary risk to the sheep. Ranchers were always concerned with keeping up the barbed wire fences, since wolves and coyotes routinely slipped through them to kill sheep. Both sheep and cattle ranchers watched their herds more closely during seasonal extremes. Early winters took their heaviest toll on sheep (more so than cattle), and in late autumn, even a soaking rain could kill a good number of sheep. In fact, the September shearing played havoc on flocks if an early cold snap caught them in short wool.

Farm work intensified during spring planting and autumn harvesting times; specific months (and weeks) for each depended largely on the crops and the weather conditions. In spring, the farmer played a waiting game, holding off planting until sufficient precipitation had prepared the ground for seed. This wait was made all the more stressful if spring rains were delayed. Each week of delay meant a later harvest. The stress of harvest time was in working against an uncertain, potentially disastrous deadline. Once a crop reached maturity, the farmer had to marshal every spare hand, enlisting wives and children and working through the night to gather the precious crop before late rains clogged the fields with mud or early frosts killed the plants. This routine held true whether the crop was corn or cotton. The rest of the year, the farmer repaired fences, weeded crops, and maintained equipment.

All farmers and a good many ranchers put some percentage of their land into subsistence crops; ranch crops like corn, oats, and barley were fed to stock in winter, and farm crops like wheat and corn restored valuable nutrients to the soil, or provided a hedge if the cash crop failed or prices were low. Both farmer and rancher planted vegetable gardens for the table—sweet corn, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, squash—and raised hogs and chickens for meat and eggs, as well as milch cows for milk and cream. Everyone had at least one horse. The rancher owned more than the farmer, while the farmer had more mules and oxen, the motive power behind wagons and plows. All of these additional items required a cycle of chores, some timed to the season, some to the day. On the whole, the rancher's life required less work but more financial capital. The farmer needed less money up front but had to work harder for each dollar. But none could say their life was easy. John Haedge answered for everyone when an interviewer asked what he remembered about growing up: "Hard work, hard work."<sup>1</sup>

Community life within the Camp Hood lands centered around two buildings—the church and the school. Each represented institutions vital to the residents' welfare, the hearts and minds of the people. Sometimes the church arrived first, then the school; other times the sequence was reversed. In the early days, one building sometimes served both purposes, but only temporarily. After 1900, most communities maintained both and rarely, if ever, used a school for religious activities. The decision to build a school or church in a certain location meant there were enough families in the immediate area to warrant the effort and expense. For example, a new school meant a sufficient number of school-age children lived within walking distance, two to five miles, of the proposed building. Church membership, on the other hand, drew from a larger circle of families—two to ten miles away—who could ride their horses or wagons to weekly services, summer revivals, and special occasions. In many cases the circles overlapped, and within that zone lay the core of a rural neighborhood—the families upon which the community was built.

If the community continued to grow, a third institution would soon appear—the post office. With the arrival of a post office, the community's name gained official status and its place on the map. Enterprising individuals applied for post offices to enhance their cash flow by giving residents a logical excuse to ride into town in the middle of the week. And once there,

# FARM WORK

"A dollar earned was a dollar made. That's the way you had to look at it. You had to work pretty hard, not like today," said John Haedge, from Latham Prairie near Antelope. When asked what he remembered about growing up, his reply: "Hard work, hard work."<sup>1</sup>

"We worked. (We) got up early in the morning, and . . . mother made us all get up and eat breakfast. And then as soon as it was light enough, you went to the field to work," recalled Molly Duncan.<sup>2</sup>

"About all we got to do was work and go to church and go to school," remembered Hazel Graham Wilkinson. She continued, "Most girls worked in the fields, same as the boys did. Of course, the boys carried the heavy end of it. But my sisters and me had to shock the oats when they cut the grain. We picked cotton. We had maize. We didn't have to gather corn much because we were in school. But, yes, most families the girls worked in the fields same as the boys did."<sup>3</sup>

"(If) daddy was plowing, we had to hoe," John Gail Edwards recalled. "And sometimes they'd get through plowing before us, and so they'd get to

hoeing the cotton and corn. And we'd slip off down there to the creek and go in, clothes and all, go swimming. And one of us would stand guard while the other two went. And we'd hear our mother calling, and we'd make a signal. Our clothes would be dry by the time she got down there."<sup>4</sup>

Farmers preferred mules to horses, because horses ran into wire fences or off into a ditch when frightened. Mules also were considered less likely to develop colic from overeating, a problem that occasionally plagued horses.<sup>5</sup> Coryell County was once considered the seat of the best-quality mules raised in the state, bred from the best jacks money could buy from mule-rich areas in Tennessee and Missouri. Long-time Coryell County farm expert, Clois D. Stone, estimates that farmers owned about six horses or mules to each tractor or motorized farm vehicle. Thirty years later, the proportions had shifted in favor of tractors by eighteen to one.<sup>6</sup> "Dad used the mules to plow the fields," Hope Edwards Turner remembered. "He never had any mechanized machinery. He never drove a car, and he didn't like to ride in one." Mary Edwards Groves added, "He'd ride with his foot on the running board."<sup>7</sup>

Planting and plowing with mules required a great deal of time. The farmer had to start work by daylight in order to put in a good day's work—covering about four or five acres with a walking plow—because the teams had to be stopped and cooled off frequently. After double-row planters and cultivators were introduced, twelve to fourteen acres of land could be worked each day with four good mules or horses.<sup>8</sup>

The Wilkinsons ran a typical small farm along Cowhouse Creek. "Dad raised corn and cotton and some maize, and grain, oats or wheat, mainly oats. My dad didn't have a lot of cattle. We just had a few head of livestock, Hereford cattle, and he farmed with a team. He had a team of mules. My dad didn't have sheep . . . (M)ost everybody right in that area had sheep and goats. But we didn't have enough land to have very many."<sup>9</sup>

Barney Duncan remembered that Blackland grazing prairie "made good cotton if you plowed it, you know, and



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

there's lots of good black land right out here. . . . You had to plow it up, . . . break the land and turn—it kind of turns it over, and lets some of the grass that's growing on top, it covers it up, and that gives you fertilizer, and it also gives you a little more drawing for water, see; it can pull water out of the ground easier, if its got some loose grasses along, you know."<sup>10</sup> He also recalled, "If you grew cotton, you had to chop it, you see; when you planted it, you'd have so many cotton (plants close together,) that you'd have to come along and thin it out."<sup>11</sup> "You'd just get maybe a dollar a day to chop cotton."<sup>12</sup>

Barney Duncan explained, when cotton was "beginning to get ripe, where you can pick it, then they'll move a wagon out into the field, where they'll pick a row or two rows, and then they'll move the wagon on it. . . . (Y)ou've seen cotton sacks, you can go along and pick it and pick it and pick it—then you weigh it, and the way they do, they'll give you so much a pound for picking it."<sup>13</sup>

"(O)n Christmas Eve I walked a mile, carried my lunch in a paper bag and picked cotton that was higher than my head," Mrs. Winifred Bell recalled from the Great Depression years. "(N)obody liked to pick cotton in tall cotton. This cotton was in a low bottom where it grew rank. . . . And there had been a flood, and the cotton field had been overflowed (and) the cotton bolls were loaded and coated with silt from the flood, which made it dirty to pick and difficult to breath(e). And I worked all day picking cotton and then walked home a mile at sundown. And I made 40¢ and I was delighted."<sup>14</sup>

Harvested cotton fields also had other uses on the farm, according to Barney Duncan. "You'd get lots of food from the cotton. . . . (Cattle would) eat the cotton that you could get . . . maybe out of fifty acres, you'd get maybe four or five little fields, that you could turn the cows in, let 'em eat on the cotton and fatten them up."<sup>15</sup>

"Cotton was a money-maker . . . (but) you had to have some corn, 'cause a lot of people go and have the corn ground and make meal, you know." Barney Duncan ran a gas-powered gristmill or "corn grinder." "Neighbors would bring sometimes a bag of corn, and we'd grind it there, I think we charged

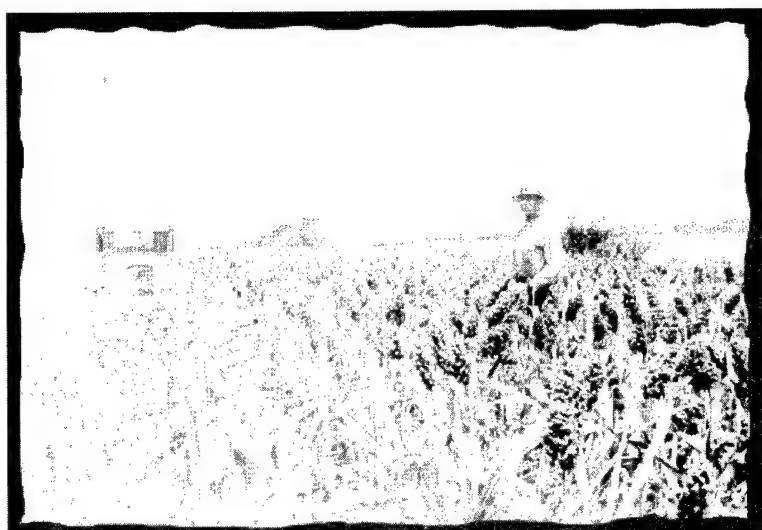


Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

them a fourth or fifth of whatever made it out. So we used it up ourselves, you know."<sup>16</sup>

"And then oats, you planted oats, and when the oats got up big enough, they'd have to be cut," recalled Molly Duncan. "And the (reaper) would tie them into bundles, and you had to take the bundles and stack them up in shocks. So it stayed that way until it was hauled into the barn."<sup>17</sup>

"When corn came on, you had to pull the corn off the corn stalk and throw it on the wagon," Molly Duncan remembered from her days in the corn field. "My dad would drive and have the wagon with the horses and he would stand on one side, and he would drive the horses, and we had to pull the corn and throw it in the wagon."<sup>18</sup>

Everyone had some milk cows and did their own milking. "A dairy would have gone out of business because everybody milked their own cows," remembered John Edwards. "Daddy would keep a bunch of cows, and if one of the neighbors got destitute for a milk cow he'd loan them a cow. They'd come get the cow with a young calf, and the only thing he asked them to do was not to hit his calf in the head with a churn dasher."<sup>19</sup> Goats and cows not only provided milk, they helped keep brush down around the farm.

Mary Groves remembered her family's turkeys. "If the turkey strayed, got into the neighbors' field, we would have to bring them home. They had bells on, so we could kind of tell where they were. We'd have to bring them back and make them roost close to home so the varmints didn't get them. We did lots of going after turkeys. Find out they were in someone else's field, and they didn't appreciate it one bit."<sup>20</sup>

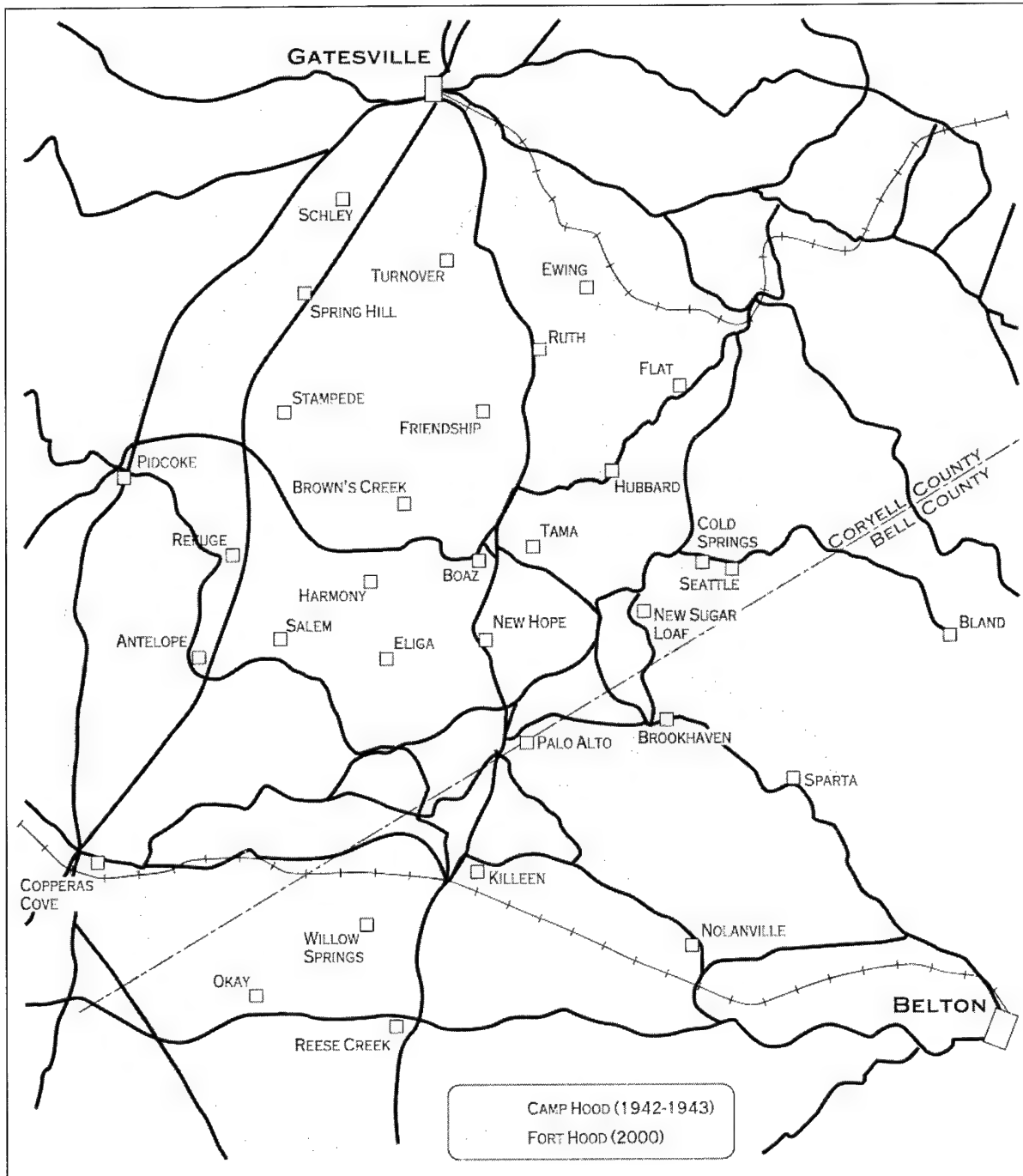
the farmer or rancher could avail himself of the postman's unofficial duties as head of the town's news syndicate, message service, weather station, and political forum, along with whatever commercial enterprise the proprietor offered, whether that be a general store or a flour mill.

### **Population Growth in Bell and Coryell Counties**

By the 1890s, the Camp Hood lands had twenty-eight communities scattered across the hills and valleys. This figure represented the high mark of community development that had begun in the 1840s when settlers moved up the Brazos River—lured to the security of Fort Gates, and later by the prospects of Gatesville, Belton, and the Leon River valley—then dispersed throughout the countryside until the terrain was blanketed with homes and families. In the coming decades, this trend would reverse. The growth of towns and cities around the perimeter of Camp Hood lands, along with improved roads, gave farmers and ranchers a wider selection of goods and services as well as more opportunities to connect with the rest of the state. But this increased urbanization, lying as it did just beyond Camp Hood lands, in time began to pull at the fabric of rural community life. Beginning in the 1920s, the number of communities on Camp Hood grounds declined through attrition, school consolidation, and improved transportation.

For Bell County, the 1890s marked the age of enlightenment. The two urban centers that supplied and supported farmers in the southern half of Camp Hood lands became, as it were, a Paris on the prairie, a city of lights. Belton and Temple each installed electric power plants and a web of power lines within a year of the new decade. The Temple city council issued contracts for electrification, telephone, and water service as early as 1888, but the franchise collapsed before anything was built. They issued a second contract, but this too fell on hard times. Finally, in October 1890, the Texas Electric Light Company signed a contract to supply a power plant and distribution system to be operational within four months. Down the road, Belton's first electric company, Belton Electric Light Company, installed lights in six hundred houses throughout the city in 1889. Almost simultaneously, the city's new telephone company strung wire that linked homes in the area to a central switching office located next door to the new public





library. Belton also drilled three artesian wells near Nolan Creek in 1890 to supply the town with fresh water, replacing water pumped from the lower Leon River.<sup>2</sup>

Competition from the railroad town spurred Belton to take creative action in an effort to halt the decline of businesses and population. Temple may have been the crossroads for the region, but Belton was destined to be the county's marketplace. In 1891, Belton leaders organized the first Bell

Roads, settlements, and railroads in the Camp Hood area, ca. 1913.



County Fair, then started the tradition of First Monday markets in the Belton Market Square. The First Monday attracted farmers throughout the county, and more than a few from southern Coryell County also came to sell their fruits and vegetables or to shop in Belton stores. The following year, sixty of Belton's business leaders incorporated the Belton Club, a "social club" whose primary objective was the vigorous promotion of Belton business and industry. The city watched the construction of the Central Hotel in 1890, a three-story brick hotel known as "one of the finest in Texas." Five years later, citizens could boast of their second opera house, the Grand—an elegant stone building facing the courthouse square.<sup>3</sup>

At only half the size of Belton, Gatesville would not make similar advances for another two decades. Meanwhile, those interested in metropolitan diversions either took the south road to the Temple-Belton area or hopped the train to Waco. As the transit center in the heart of the Blacklands, Waco's progress outpaced that of Temple by several years. In 1882, Waco was served by four railroads compared to Temple's two. The city installed gas lines in 1874, telephones in 1881, electricity and lights in 1886, and water lines in 1890.<sup>4</sup> Everything Waco did was larger and grander than anything found in Bell County, and all of that sophistication was only a few hours away by rail. For those living in or near Gatesville, it was faster to go the extra distance to Waco by rail than go to Temple by wagon. Citizens of Gatesville had all they needed and could comfortably afford, and a host of additional luxuries awaited nearby.

If luxuries fueled urban growth outside Camp Hood lands during the 1890s, it was necessity that prompted urban expansion within the area. Base necessities of rural community life were church and school. The three new towns formed in this decade—Stampede (1892), Harmony (1893), and Refuge (1896)—provided ranchers, farmers, and tenants living in the middle of the Camp Hood lands with a convenient place to worship and send their kids to school. Like its nearest neighbor, Brown's Creek community, none of the three had aspirations in the world of commerce. Refuge had only a church, Stampede only a school, and Harmony had both. Refuge folded during the Great Depression; the other two survived until the 1942 evacuation. As railroads gave the surrounding towns and cities the economic edge, communities such as these, spread all across Camp Hood lands, relied more and more on simple services and basic necessities.

## **Economic Fluctuation and Agricultural Adaptation**

With the drought and blizzards of the 1880s behind them, farmers looked forward to good weather in the coming years. By the last decade of the century, the region experienced continued, if slower, growth in population. At the same time, more acres were under the plow than ever before. The mixture of ranching and farming and the diversity of crops persisted, but reliance on cotton as the primary cash crop was steadily increasing. The problems associated with farming, especially cotton farming, struck landowners and tenant farmers alike.

Cotton harvests hit the market during the same two-month period every year—September and October—flooding the market and depressing local prices below anticipated levels, even if failures elsewhere in the country might have kept prices high. The better the local harvest, the lower the price the cotton brokers paid producers at the gin. At harvest time, the merchant or banker who had extended credit throughout the year called upon the farmer and demanded immediate cash payment in full on the account. A farmer was expected to pay his creditors full value using a crop discounted due to oversupply (to say nothing of reductions due to damage, poor quality, or short weight). A few weeks after selling his cotton short and paying off creditors, he usually saw the price rebound to preharvest highs.

These problems were compounded for those who worked another man's fields. Two types of tenant farming were prevalent. In the first, landowners rented their farm and its facilities as one might rent an unfurnished apartment. This "fixed-price renting" meant the renter brought along all portable equipment and supplies—furniture for the farm house, equipment for the barn, and seed for the fields. At the end of the season, after selling the crop, the renter paid a certain percentage of the crop price, fixed in advance, as rent to the landlord. Percentages could be negotiated depending on the quality and availability of land and local market conditions. The landlord typically got about one-third of the sales, and the rest went to the farmer as compensation for his labor and the costs associated with buying seed and repairing equipment.

Sharecropping, the second type of tenant farming, bound the poorest farmers to the hardest system. Here the landlord furnished everything, and the farmer gave or "shared" just his labor. The house and all its

# HARVEST TIME

Autumn was the time for harvesting. Cotton gins gave a prize to the farmer who brought the first bale of cotton in a season, usually in early August, although most cotton was picked in September and October. Farmers brought cotton to the gin one wagonload at a time and dropped it all into a bin consigned to that farmer. When the pile weighed eighteen hundred pounds of cotton and seed, the gin took the grower's portion and ginned the rest into a five hundred-pound bale of clean, seedless cotton. The entire

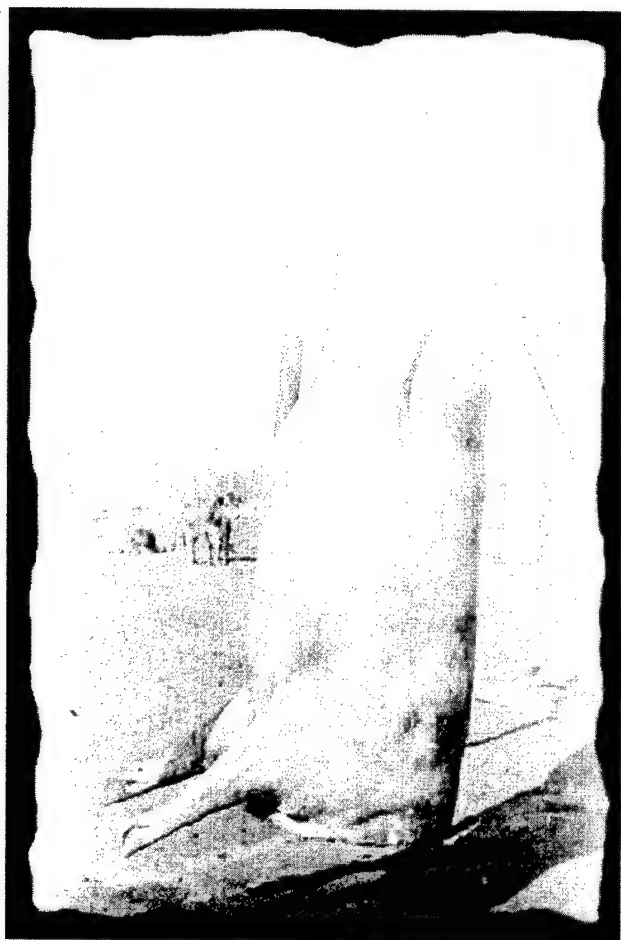


Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

process—gin, press, and tie out—for one bale of cotton took four men and a mule a total of four hours.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Winifred Bell especially remembered the gin. "(W)hen I was eight years old I picked a hundred pounds of cotton in one day. And as a reward my uncle let me ride in the wagon with him to Killeen on a bale of cotton. And see the cotton ginned. And that was one of the most exciting days in my (l)ife. I've seen Paris, and Rome, and (Tokyo), but no thrill equals that day at the gin, believe me."<sup>2</sup>

Unsure whether her husband could watch the kids while at the cotton gin, Mrs. Ellafair Robertson Bond worried herself sick. Her daughter recalled, "She'd keep telling Daddy, 'Just don't let them kids get sucked up in the gin.'" He assured her "he would not let one of his kids get sucked up in the gin."<sup>3</sup>

Roy Renyolds remembered that, "at the harvest season when they were gathering the cotton crops the other farmers would bring (their) cotton and wagons—horse and mule drawn wagons. And there would be quite a few bales of cotton that would be ginned in a day and they'd congregate around the main square or main part of downtown and the cotton buyers could take samples out of the cotton and grade it. To see what staple length and the color and all it might have and then they'd bid against each other to buy that particular farmer(')s bale of cotton."<sup>4</sup>

Renyolds continued, "The local stores did (a lot) of financing and at the end of the crop season they'd be paying up their bills(,) their groceries bills. . . . (T)hey weren't monthly(,) they didn't have monthly incomes, they'd pay them annually when they got their crops harvested and (a lot) of times the merchant's (sic) themselves would buy cotton because they'd bid a little bit more for ol' Joe Blows's bale of

cotton because Joe needed some money and he'd bid a bit more to get that particular farmer's cotton and credit it to his store account."<sup>5</sup>

Farmers would mortgage their crops for supplies and pay in the fall when crops were harvested. And then they would take the whole family to town and get new clothes and a wagonload of groceries; they bought syrup by the barrel and sugar in a hundred-pound sack. Mrs. H. W. Culp could still recall buying "16 lbs. of coffee for \$1.00 and flour (at) \$1.00 for 50 lbs."<sup>6</sup>

It became a custom after the Civil War for wheat growers to leave their entire wheat crop with the miller, who would log the weight and give the farmer a credit slip. Then, throughout the year, the miller would grind wheat taken from the common storage unit and debit the wheat account of the family.<sup>7</sup>

Late fall or winter was hog killing time, because cutting meat was easier in cold weather. Neighbors would come early in the morning to help with the process. The meat was preserved through smoking, and lard was made from the fat. Almost everyone had a small smokehouse in which a pan of coal was left to smoke for three days or more.<sup>8</sup>

On a cool, brisk, cloudless day, the farmer would invite his friends and neighbors to help kill and pack the family hog. The wash pot would be filled with water and brought to a boil. J. B. Coltharp gave a vivid, detailed description of the process, including how the hog was dispatched: "We younger kids generally spared



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

ourselves this awful sight, as we got older we steeled ourselves to it."<sup>9</sup> The hog was hoisted into the boiling water, lifted out, and all of the hair removed with a scraping knife. A stout rod with pointed ends called a "gambling stick" went through the hind legs under the tendons; it allowed the hog to be dragged from the scalding water and suspended upside down from a strong tree limb. A series of quick movements with a sharp knife opened the belly and revealed "the hog's innards . . . beautiful contrasting colors, awesome and curiosity arousing . . . the arrangement, compartmentation and cleanliness of the inside of these hogs were always fascinating and a wonder to see."<sup>10</sup> The wives made sausage casing from the intestines and rendered lard from the fat trimmings; the kids made balloons and footballs from the bladder. Bacon slabs, spare ribs, hams, backbones, and the feet were divided up among the families. Some were cooled overnight, some were set aside for smoke storage, and some were ground up the next day into sausage links. But the last and best portion was put on the stove for the evening meal. "That night we would have generous helpings of fresh spare ribs and cornbread washed down with sweetmilk, buttermilk or clabber."<sup>11</sup>

furnishings, the barn and all farm equipment, plus the water, seed, and fertilizer were leased or sold to the farmer. Because of this, the landlord took a larger portion of the crop sales. But in either case, whether tenant or sharecropper, the renter had to repay the local store for purchases made throughout the year for food and clothing. Tenant farmers had the additional expenses of farm supplies and repairs to pay. This method of providing cash advances or store credit based upon a crop that was still growing in the field—the crop-lien system—linked the farmer to a cycle of debt few could ever escape.

As more ranch lands were transformed into farms in the 1870s, and the massive influx of newcomers in the 1880s soaked up many of the remaining parcels of unclaimed ground in Bell and Coryell Counties, those holding title to large farms began parceling off small sections to rent-farmers. This placed a larger percentage of their property under cultivation and increased overall profits for the landowner. Agents with the U.S. Census Bureau grandly espoused the virtues of both systems, arguing that the tenant farmer “cannot go in debt,” but instead “lives extravagantly” under the system in which “wages are certain.” Likewise, the sharecropper “enjoys greater liberty,” since he risks “nothing but his labor” and can make use of his family at cotton-picking time.<sup>5</sup> Toward the middle of every summer, Annie Lois Bond’s father would start looking for another farm to rent for the coming year. “We moved almost every year trying to better our situation. Most renters did the same.”<sup>6</sup> In truth, cotton farming was, as Thad Sitton and Dan Utley, authors of *From Can See to Can’t*, described it, “a gambler’s trade, and every season was another roll of the dice.”<sup>7</sup> Making a profit on lands you owned was hard enough and tenant farming even more difficult, but sharecropping was the closest thing to slavery.

The emphasis on one-crop income from cotton revived old concerns about equitable pricing, cooperative buying, and getting a fair shake. During the national meeting of the Farmers Alliance in 1889, the organization’s president, Dr. Macune of Milam County, Texas, proposed that the U.S. government build cotton warehouses in which farmers could store their product until market prices rose to equitable levels, and at the same time, issue the farmer equity notes on the value of the crop, redeemable once the cotton was sold. Alliance members in Bell and Coryell Counties backed Macune’s plan and submitted bills to both houses of Congress. But the legislation failed under pressure from the banking and business interests.

Disgusted with recalcitrant leaders in both parties, Alliance members pressed for more radical action. Conservative Democrats in the Alliance balked, causing the Alliance to split over the issue, with the radical members forming the Populist Party in 1892. It came on the political scene in the nick of time.<sup>8</sup>

One way to cope with farm debt was to pay off loans with cheap money—that is, money that had a slight but measurable decrease in value over time. Expanding the amount of money in circulation had this effect; each dollar lost some of its purchase power as more dollars came into the marketplace. Such a system worked best with long-term debt, such as loans to purchase ranch land or farm equipment. Debts incurred at one price could be repaid years later using money that, in the interim, had lost a percentage of its face value. In the 1880s, American economists distrusted paper money, relying on metal coins, or at least certificates backed by an equal amount of precious metals stored at Fort Knox. Despite gold strikes in California and Colorado, new sources of gold were few and far between. Therefore, as population increased, immigration expanded, and industrial growth continued, more and more people fought over the same quantity of gold coin, driving the

Cotton pickers in the field, Coryell County (courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards).





value up—the exact opposite of the farmer's desire. Both eastern industrialists and southern farmers fought over the limited supply of gold-supported capital needed to finance their operations, and it was the farmer who drew the short end of the stick. Time and again, gold-backed money went into railroad expansion and new factories, leaving the farmer and rancher to fight over the rest.<sup>9</sup> Raw silver, on the other hand, continued to pour onto the markets from silver mines in Colorado and Wyoming. This drove the face value of silver steadily downward, but the federal treasury did not support silver. Debt-ridden farmers clamored for federal support of silver coinage as an alternative to gold-backed coins. The call for “free silver” reverberated around rural districts in the south and midwest during the late 1880s. As a compromise, Congress passed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1890, obligating the federal treasury to purchase 4.5 million ounces of silver each month and issue paper notes, or certificates, against it. Three years later, federal gold reserves fell to such dangerous lows that the stock market crashed in April 1893. The subsequent depression struck Texas cotton farmers particularly hard.<sup>10</sup>

The bottom dropped out of cotton prices. H. K. Clem, who had moved to the Camp Hood lands in 1875, thought that prices for wheat and cotton “reached the lowest point since the Cival [sic] War.”<sup>11</sup> Even landowners who produced good crops that year were unable to repay their store tab when the merchant came calling. But good crops were scarce that year because, on top of everything else, 1893 was one of the driest years since the 1887 drought. The one-two punch clobbered hundreds of cotton farmers, forcing them to mortgage their land to bankers or merchants. Farmers fortunate enough to have paid off their mortgage before 1893 weathered the depression. Those who owed, but could not pay, were foreclosed on and became tenant farmers. As a result, the number of tenant farmers in Bell County increased by 18 percent in one decade.<sup>12</sup>

The crash of 1893 made tenant farming, and especially sharecropping, the dominant form of farm labor. Before the Civil War, almost everyone worked farms they themselves owned, but a little over one-third were renters by 1890. After 1893, the statewide figure jumped to over half. By 1910, the figure had increased to over 60 percent, with nine out of ten of these being sharecroppers. Tenancy rates in Bell County had reached the 60 percent level a decade earlier.<sup>13</sup> In Coryell County, the rate hovered above the halfway mark until the 1940s.

The 1893 crash affected sheep ranching and cattle as well. Sheep producers were hit with a double whammy that knocked many Texas herders out of business. One year after the crash, Congress passed the Wilson-Gorman tariff that removed all trade barriers to foreign wool. European wool producers flooded the domestic market, and prices brought low by the monetary crisis sank even further with the overabundance of wool. After several years of lobbying, the sheep industry forced Congress in 1897 to reinstate tariff limits against imported wool. A few stalwarts, such as C. F. Davis, survived the price fluctuations. Davis, a native of Harris County, began raising sheep in the Antelope and Copperas Cove region in 1890 and was considered to be one of the top sheep producers on Camp Hood lands; at the height of the market he ran as many as 1,500 sheep. Though records show four other owners with flocks in excess of 1,000 head, after the 1893 crash, sheep production as a whole remained flat for several decades. Cattle production, on the other hand, rebounded from a precipitous drop in prices and a 62 percent drop in herd size, in part because sheep ranchers bought cattle as a hedge against future trade wars.

Even though Coryell County always provided a Democratic majority for presidential and gubernatorial candidates, farmers and ranchers alike had a tendency to support third-party political candidates, including the Populist Party. The six precincts between Killeen and Gatesville showed strong support, if not pluralities, for third parties throughout the 1880s, and all but one supported the Populist movement in the 1890s. Antelope and Brown's Creek stood foursquare behind William Jennings Bryan and the Populists throughout the 1890s. Sugar Loaf, Spring Hill, and nearby Copperas Cove also endorsed the Populist Party. Although most Americans dropped the third-party option when the Populist Party fused with the Democratic ticket by 1900, farmers in the Brown's Creek precinct voted in large numbers for Populist gubernatorial candidate Pat B. Clark in 1904.<sup>14</sup>

The depression ended in 1898 as rapidly as it had begun. Outstanding weather brought in a good cotton crop in September 1898 and a bumper crop the next year. The abundance of cotton failed to depress prices, which held steady in 1898 and then increased substantially in 1899, the year the cotton market hit record highs. Several things brought about this fortuitous shift: increased demand nationally, government contracts for the Spanish-American war effort, and the arrival in San Francisco of a million dollars in gold bullion dredged from the Klondike region of Canada. Abundance of gold and high



demand for cotton lifted Texas farmers out of years of accumulated debt. By 1900, over 80 percent of the owner-occupied farm homes were paid off. According to George Tyler, many Bell County farmers pulled into the black for the first time in years, and the resulting business prosperity dampened interest in third-party candidates.<sup>15</sup>

Signs of prosperity were everywhere. Belton businessmen raised \$35,000 to build the first cotton mill in the region in 1901. The two-story brick building operated a hundred looms for weaving unbleached domestic cotton, but heavy competition caused the company to shift to cotton yarn a few years later. In 1904, Temple and Belton contracted for an interurban transportation service that linked the two cities and opened a new campground called Memorial Park. On the thirty-eight-acre lot, covered with live oaks and shade trees, the transit company built a spacious summer theater for residents of both cities. Success allowed time for reflection in Bell and Coryell Counties, and the "old home week" of 1903 produced articles and histories about the life and times of early pioneers that remain a key resource for understanding the growth and concerns of the area from its beginning in 1849 to the turn of the century.<sup>16</sup>

Prosperity struck Copperas Cove in a peculiar way. Fire swept through the town in 1900, consuming most of the wood structures in the central business district. The only building to survive was H. K. Clem's stone store. Undeterred, town leaders responded to this devastation with renewed energy. They completely rebuilt the downtown area, this time using limestone and brick.<sup>17</sup>

Six years of prosperity ended in 1904 when the boll weevil reached Bell and Coryell Counties. "About the best the farmer can do," said George Tyler, "is plant early, cultivate intensely, and hope for a hot summer and a cold winter." Southern farmers converted from cotton to peanuts in the wake of the boll weevil infestation, but cotton farmers in the Blacklands of Texas just stood their ground and hoped for the best.<sup>18</sup>

The New York Stock Exchange took an abrupt dive in October 1907, just when cotton brokers across the south needed cash to purchase the annual cotton crop. In Bell County, bankers issued cashiers' checks as an emergency currency, guaranteed by all the banks in the county. By December the crisis had passed, and farmers and merchants redeemed their cashiers' checks for cash payments. Such quick thinking prevented a general run on the banks and kept the panic from spreading beyond the confines of Wall Street. But the credit squeeze still knocked out a few businesses; the Belton

cotton mill, for example, closed its doors after marking its first profits. The panic had quite a different effect on Gatesville banks. As bad luck would have it, two of its three banks opened the same month the market crashed. Within a year, both the Farmers National and the State Bank and Trust were absorbed by the older, more financially stable Gatesville National Bank.

By 1910, the populations of Bell and Coryell Counties had leveled off, with the only growth having occurred in the urban centers. The population of Killeen neared the thousand mark, and Temple moved into clear ascendancy, with nearly twice as many residents as Belton. Gatesville's population reached a respectable four thousand citizens. And within the Camp Hood lands two new communities were established—Eliga (1903) and Ewing (1910)—in fact, the last two communities to be established. Eliga (pronounced like the biblical prophet Elijah) stood where House Creek emptied into Cowhouse Creek, three miles south of Harmony in the central part of the Camp lands. Eliga offered its residents a convenient post office, gin, and blacksmith, along with a church. The second community, Ewing, was two miles downstream of Pleasant Grove along the Leon River. It had a general store and blacksmith, as well as a school and church, possibly replacing services lost when Pleasant Grove declined due to school consolidation.

More communities dropped from the map after the turn of the century than at any other time. Out of the thirty-two communities established on Camp Hood lands since 1850, five ceased to exist in the six-year period from 1906 to 1912. These included Pilot Knob (1906); Owl Creek (1908); and Branchville, Farmer's Branch, and Pleasant Grove (1910). By way of contrast, only one community (Refuge) closed during the Great Depression. The reason for this trend is uncertain. Geography played no part, as the communities were spread from one end of Camp Hood to the other, in bottomlands and uplands. Although most arrived on the scene late (four out of six began after the railroads arrived), Owl Creek began in 1857 in the middle of one of the worst droughts on record. Bad weather appears to have played an insignificant role, if any, since the last serious drought was in the 1880s and the next one would not begin until 1916. We will probably never determine the precise reason. With the exception of Boaz, we know very little about these thirty-two communities; in some cases, like Branchville and Farmer's Branch, we cannot even fix their exact location. Most likely the disappearance of the thirty-two communities resulted from a fatal combination of circumstances, including increased dependence on cotton, generally

falling farm prices, and competition from larger cities outside the Camp Hood lands, especially after the introduction of the automobile.

### **Roads to the Wider World**

Three years before Ford introduced the Model T in 1909, automobiles had already become prevalent in Bell and Coryell Counties. The National Good Roads Association lobbied for state and federal funds to grade, gravel, and surface main roads and thoroughfares. In 1905, and again in 1907, the group met in Temple and then Belton to discuss how to improve road conditions in the region. Coryell County farmers joined in those discussions. However, as late as 1910 the county could count barely seventy-five miles of graveled roads, none of it hard surfaced.<sup>19</sup>

But even a gravel road was a noticeable improvement, one that George Bond, a renter from Ewing, could appreciate. He told his daughter, "When we

Grading dirt road, ca. 1912  
(reprinted from  
*TEXAS HIGHWAYS*).



hit the public road I won't even have to tell you. You'll know it right off." When they headed into Gatesville he turned to her and said, "Loise Jane, have you noticed the road is different?" "No, not much different," she said. Her father exclaimed, "This is the PUBLIC ROAD." She had it built up in her mind as something very spectacular. "I thought there would be more to a public road than this." "Aw shaw! Loise Jane, just listen to the iron rim of the wagon wheels grinding on the gravel." She looked again and saw the horses had their heads up, the muscles in their necks and backs were relaxed, unlike pulling along the sandy lane where the horses had their heads down under the strain. She was still disappointed.<sup>20</sup> Federal support for county roads came in 1916, when the Federal Aid Law financed the improvement of post roads used to transport mail.

Improved road conditions and the availability of store-bought and preserved ham and pork products may have contributed to the 70 percent drop in hog production after 1910. But cattle also decreased in numbers. Cotton remained the cash crop for Coryell County. A quarter of the cultivated acreage—almost 115,000 acres—contained cotton, twice as many acres as corn. But corn remained the primary cattle feed, with twice the acreage of oats, wheat, and hay combined.

The gunfire in Europe that signaled the beginning of the Great War in 1914 took many people by surprise. Events went from bad to worse very quickly, and as soon as German troops crossed into France, the stock market in the United States fell. Cotton prices dropped to half their summer valuation as money supplies tightened for the fall purchase of cotton and other farm products. Fortunately, this depression was short lived, replaced the next year by a boom in stocks, cotton sales, and prices generally. Europe needed American products, and cotton for uniforms and ammunition led the way; European gold filled the banks, lifted the stocks, and paid for the cotton. The year the United States entered the war (1917), cotton prices stood at the record level of twenty cents per pound.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, record cotton prices were of no benefit to central and west Texas farmers, who were hit by a severe two-year drought that began in 1917. Even the best yields were light, and some farms produced no cotton at all.<sup>22</sup> Emergency committees offered loans and other assistance to parched farmers to help them get another crop in the ground for 1919. This effort paid off, as rains returned and crop yields rebounded to predrought levels, joined at the marketplace by prices pumped to a forty-cent-per-pound high by American

involvement in the war effort. However, that profitable situation lasted only one year. Then the war ended, soldiers returned home, and the government canceled military contracts as it switched back to a peacetime economy. Cotton prices dropped like a brick, catching speculators and cotton brokers by surprise. Production costs for the 1920 cotton crop had increased alongside the prices, and when the bales hit the scales in October, the fifteen-cent-per-pound price failed to cover costs.<sup>23</sup>

Though farmers could not see it at the time, cotton prices had bottomed. Through the first half of the 1920s, cotton would begin a slow climb back up the price ladder, once more holding forth the promise of prosperity, if not this year, then the next. But regardless of the market and its periodic spasms, residents within the Camp Hood lands continued as they had in decades past. Church meetings, Sunday services, school days, and the cycles of farm and ranch work prevailed through war and despite drought and market plunges and all other trials. Little had changed in three decades, and these essential patterns of life would continue for decades more. In time, they would be looked upon as "the good old days," and by then all the rough edges would be rubbed smooth in the retelling. And the young ears that heard their grandparents' tales of Indian raids and cattle drives were among

Graveled State  
Highway 7, Coryell  
County (courtesy of  
TEXAS HIGHWAYS).



the last to get the story straight from those who pioneered the land. These restless children were the hope of the modern age, and the last generation to live on the Camp Hood lands.

- 1921    Resurgence of KKK in Texas begins
- 1923    Oklahoma declares martial law to extricate KKK
- 1927    Charles Lindbergh flies solo to Europe
- 1928    First office ever built with air conditioning opens in San Antonio
- 1929    Stock market crashes on Black Monday (October 29)
- 1931    Grasshoppers invade Nebraska
- 1934    Government-sponsored cattle kill in Coryell County
- 1941    Lend-Lease Act signed into law (March 11)  
       Japan attacks Pearl Harbor (December 7)  
       Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Bruce tours Killeen area (December 20)
- 1942    U.S. Army announces antitank training base will be in Killeen area  
       (January 12)

# HIGH TIMES AND LOW

## 1920-1942

8

### Growing Pains

For those living in central Texas cities, the Twenties roared a good deal less than in the larger cities back east, but they still bustled and hustled. Steady economic progress throughout the decade impacted the larger cities in Bell and Coryell Counties through improvements and expansion of existing institutions and structures. With the exception of such novelties as barn-storming aeroplanes and radios, few communities encountered anything radically different in the circumstances of daily living they had known since the turn of the century.

Amenities that were rapidly becoming standards of urban life—water, gas, electricity, and telephone service—reached new neighborhoods in Belton, Temple, Gatesville, and Killeen. These cities began receiving supplementary power from larger power stations in McLennan County and elsewhere in Texas, as electrical utilities linked smaller communities in both counties into the growing network of interstate transmission lines and power stations. But this expansion reached only those who lived in well-established towns and cities; the electrification of the smaller communities and individual farm homes awaited a major push from the federal government in the next decade. When Texas Power and Light ran electrical lines to the homes in northern Bell County, the farmer had to pay for the lines and poles and labor. Few could afford the expense.<sup>1</sup>

Nationwide, since the 1890s, a growing disparity existed between the amenities of urban life—indoor plumbing and electricity being the top two—and their absence in rural life, as well as the difficulties of successfully operating a small farm during droughts, floods, and stock market fluctuations. This disparity went largely unrecognized by the nation's farming and ranching families, because most had few opportunities to visit the larger cities where such improvements were occurring. That all changed when the U.S. Army shipped farm boys to training camps around the country, then gave them



leave in New York City before sending them to Europe. As would happen again in the next war, thousands of young men got a taste for the big city comforts and excitement, and many found it difficult to return to the family farm after returning from the front line. If the farm boys tried to forget what they had seen in New York, the new-fangled radio would remind them, tempting them with urban music and entertainment. It was enough to tip the scales in favor of city life. The 1920 U.S. census registered signs of this shift when, for the first time, slightly more than half of the population lived in urban areas. In predominately rural Bell and Coryell Counties, the overall population dipped in the 1920s, with Belton being the only city to increase its population; this increase probably reflected a rebound from the previous two decades of reduction brought about from the rush to Temple, a city that continued to modernize throughout the 1920s.

Temple, by now the second largest city in a five-county region, never turned toward a setting sun. The western towns of Belton, Gatesville, and Killeen could offer little competition; Temple had its eye on Waco. Whatever Waco did, Temple soon followed suit. Waco built skyscrapers in the 1920s; Temple constructed three in the same decade. The city expanded its high school and built a junior college. The First Lutheran Church was rebuilt and enlarged, as was the Kings' Daughters' Hospital.<sup>2</sup>

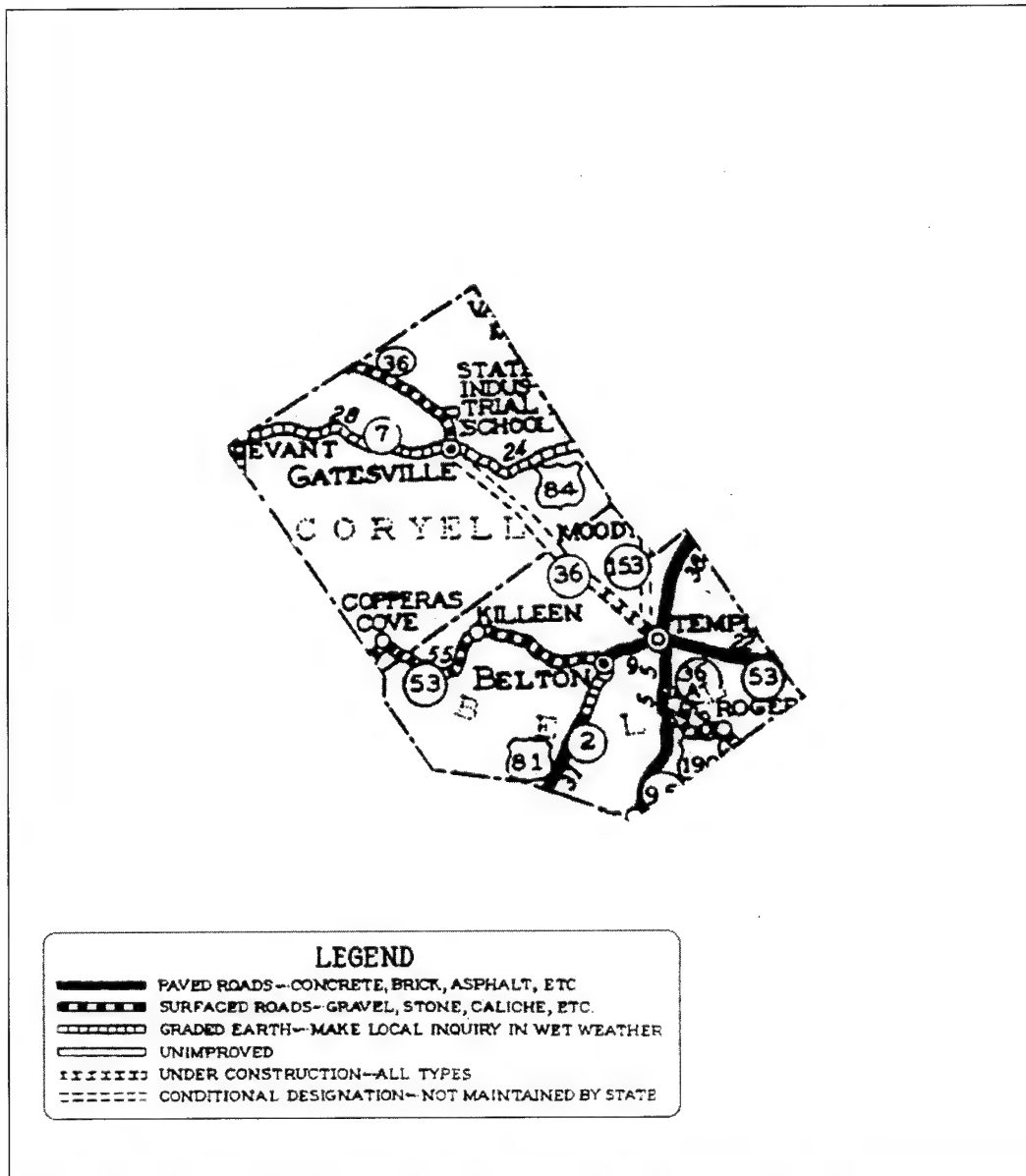
Neither Belton nor Gatesville saw a construction boom anywhere close to that of Temple. Historical sources suggest that Gatesville's progress consisted largely of new businesses created with the support of the Gatesville Chamber of Commerce, established in 1925. Of the ninety-three Gatesville businesses and professional offices Zelma Scott lists in Appendix I of *A History of Coryell County, Texas*, as having opened prior to 1942, over a quarter of those started in the 1920s. Beyond that decade, no mention is made of any substantive municipal building projects or improvements in Gatesville.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, Belton continued to provide the same range of social and cultural activities that had made it a traditional gathering place for shoppers and social clubs. For example, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas started Belton's Ben Milam chapter in 1921. But municipal projects in Belton were an impossibility because the city was broke. During the previous decade, the council had issued bonds for more than a half million dollars in city improvements, only to discover in 1921 an irregularity in the repayment schedule. The city could not pay the interest, so the bondholders sued. Trials and appeals continued throughout the 1920s. In the end, the courts placed

Belton on a restrictive order and made the city pay out the bonds for the next half century.<sup>4</sup>

Road construction in Bell and Coryell Counties was largely outside the cities. The push for good roads shifted from an urban cause championed by the only constituency that could afford the expensive, fragile automobiles, to a rural cause when Ford Motor Company slashed the price for a Model T in 1913 and began building trucks for the war effort. After the war, a growing number of truck-owning farmers wanted to move their farm products to the city marketplace, but the roads were nearly impassable after any amount of rainfall. On cold, wet days, Lucille Scrivner recalled that her father would leave the truck in the yard and walk to meet her coming home from school in Palo Alto.

Early highways in  
central Texas, 1935  
(State Highway  
Commission, Texas).



# SCHOOLS

Looking back, Hazel Graham Wilkinson summed up her school experience: "I studied reading, writing, and arithmetic. We had a good school. The basic subjects."<sup>1</sup>

Charley Oswalt, headmaster for the Brookhaven School, began each day with a prayer. J. J. Bishop recalled, "He prayed that we would be good, but just in case his prayer didn't make the point, he always kept some well-seasoned Dogwood switches on hand."<sup>2</sup>

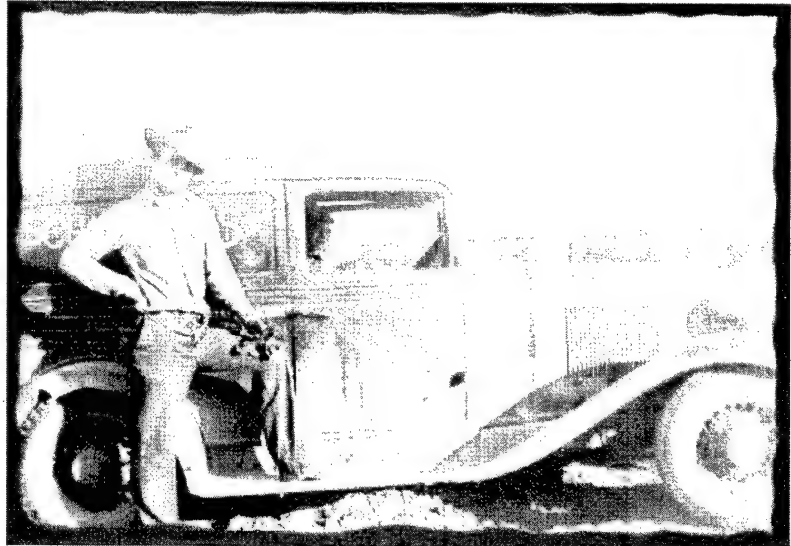
Some former students can still remember every detail of their old grade school. John Gail Edwards, for instance, described the Stampede School he attended as "a little frame building, two rooms, and it had an inset porch on it facing the west. And it had a cloakroom over here on each side for us to hang our coats in. Then it opened into the two doors, one on each side, a foyer, the principal's room and then the little primary room over here on the right. Each of them had a pot-bellied stove back in the back with a big curtain around it burning wood. It was a two-teacher school."<sup>3</sup>

Stampede School burned on April 1, 1921. Melba G. Bennett recalled, "When the children were told it had burned they thought it was an April Fools' trick." Men in the community hauled three loads of lumber by wagon team and rebuilt the two-room school.<sup>4</sup>

Antelope School had three rooms and a hand pump outside to draw water from a dug well. "I thought (Antelope) was the biggest school I ever saw, but it wasn't all that big," recalled Hazel Wilkinson in 1998. "We just had three large rooms that taught through the tenth grade, first through the tenth grade. Three teachers, and then later they built another room onto it and we had four teachers. We always had some good ball teams, good basketball . . . a little bit of baseball."<sup>5</sup>

Maple School went through eleventh grade, but some students transferred to Gatesville before finishing at Maple. The school had three or four rooms and four teachers; the fourth room was the school auditorium that doubled as a classroom. Sliding doors opened the room to make it larger.<sup>6</sup>

Schools held communities together. Communities that operated schools were generally the most active and had the largest number of local services. Districts in which schools were contracted with other communities, or were consolidated and moved to other areas, had significantly fewer services.<sup>7</sup> The school, more than any other community institution, cut across church, class, and occupational differences, bringing together farmers and ranchers, Baptists and Catholics, and the well-to-do with the less



Francis Wolf, bus driver for the Maple School, 1938.

Photo courtesy of Mary Beth Graham Garman

fortunate.<sup>8</sup> The school served as town hall, social center, precinct hall, and sometimes as a church.

School terms were short. Farmers needed their children to assist in planting the fields in spring and harvesting in autumn. Mrs. W. H. Culp recalled that some schools only lasted three to four months: "the rest of the time the children had to work in the cotton fields."<sup>9</sup> John Edwards remembered, "there were a lot of 6-months' schools. They'd start school in October or in the middle of September and let us go to school for 2 weeks, and then turn out for 2 weeks until we got the cotton picked. There were several schools at Stampede that we went to that were just

6 months. October (through) March. That's all the school we had."<sup>10</sup>

A social survey found that poorer areas in western Bell County once had the lowest educational standards in the county. Yet in the 1930s researchers found "some of the poorest, most isolated families sending their children to high school, often at great personal sacrifice." A striking example was that of an illiterate charcoal burner who lived about four miles from a school bus route in a flimsy, one-room shack with a dirt floor, boarding his oldest child in town to enable her to attend high school.<sup>11</sup>

Annie Lois Bond could attest to this thirst for learning. Her father "did believe in education, and was very ambitious for his kids to be educated. He made every provision he could to help us achieve that goal. Since we were renters anyway, he always tried to rent a little farm as close to school and church as possible."<sup>12</sup>

Hazel Wilkinson rode each day from Eliga to school in Antelope. "We had to ride horses to school 6¼ miles, which we did for a few years. Then there got to be so many kids, Daddy didn't have enough horses. So he let us go in the Model T. car. My sister and my brother took turns (driving)."<sup>13</sup>

Some walked three to four miles to school each day, taking their lunches in a "dinner bucket." Lunch usually consisted of molasses, a buttered biscuit, and a slice of bacon.<sup>14</sup> Hope Edwards Turner recalled that, "(K)ids showed up at school with an apple or an orange, we'd trade them our pies for the apple or oranges because we had pies all the time, and some mothers didn't know about making pies. But our mother did." Mrs. Edwards would "take a piece of biscuit dough and fold it this way, like a pie. But she'd put butter and sugar in there and then she'd put it in the oven, and that sugar would melt, and the butter together."<sup>15</sup>

The superintendent of Killeen schools, Mr. Peebles, was the only degreed teacher in the area in the 1930s. Most school teachers completed two years of college at Southwest Texas State Normal School in San Marcos, the teachers' college, and received their certificate. Few obtained a bachelor's, and none went so far as a master's degree.<sup>16</sup>

Molly Duncan recalled her days as a school teacher in the 1930s when the school day went from eight to four. "You had to carry your lunch, and sometimes you had to carry your water, because sometimes the water was no good. The water was in a kind of a dug well down in a branch-like, or creek-like, and sometimes the water was no good." She would walk to the school every day unless "it was real cold—bad weather—the mail carrier happened to be my father's cousin, and if it was bad weather, he'd let me ride."<sup>17</sup>

Teachers and students were often reviewed by the county school inspector. In first grade, recalled Mary Edwards Grove, "I was so small and my feet wouldn't touch the floor. So I had a block to put my feet on, and (the school inspector from Gatesville) didn't like the way I held my feet. He'd come in and he'd slap them down on that block. . . . I thought, if I were just a little bit bigger, I could just have pinched his head off."<sup>18</sup>

"At the end of school each year we had a big picnic, and they served barbecue, and the ladies brought vegetables and the desserts," remembered Hazel Wilkinson. "My uncle George Wright was in charge of the barbecue. He did a wonderful job. And they would have different men to do different things for entertainment in the morning, and then we'd have our lunch, and then Antelope and Copperas Cove always played baseball. And then that night they'd have what we would call now a senior play. They'd put on a big play and everyone would come."<sup>19</sup>



Photo courtesy of Betty Ruth Franklin Taylor

"He couldn't come in the truck because the roads were too muddy and the truck would get stuck in the mud and probably stay there for days until the weather would change." So he would stop at the halfway point, build a small fire to warm the kids, and wrap their feet in gunnysacks he had brought from home.<sup>5</sup>

The National Grange advocated better roads for farmers as early as 1906, when their journal declared "Bad roads spell ISOLATION for the American farmer."<sup>6</sup> By the 1920s, farmers were no longer satisfied with scraping dirt roads after a rainfall; they wanted passable roads year-round. The Texas Highway Department, established in 1917, took over road maintenance of the county farm-to-market system in 1924.<sup>7</sup> Scraping gave way to graveling in this period, and a number of contractors moved around the state cutting drainage ditches, scraping and flattening road beds, then topping them off with gravel. One contractor in Bell County, Herman Brown, later gained national prominence as one of the nation's leading civil engineering contractors.<sup>8</sup>

Automobiles influenced farm life in another way. They provided the farmer and rancher with the first significant alternative to farm-derived income. With improved road maintenance and cheaper automobiles, farmers could take jobs in town as a way to supplement farm income. For example, Bill and Orval Bay helped establish Bay's Grocery Store in Killeen, but for the first few years, each man continued to operate his own farm in the Tama area, driving into town when it was his turn to manage the store.<sup>9</sup>

Another result of the prevalence of automobiles was the willingness of rural residents to travel longer distances for primary services, services once provided by the smaller communities scattered throughout the Camp Hood lands. In the 1920s, the importance, and therefore the influence, of the smallest towns waned somewhat. Though churches, and to some extent schools, gained strength in the decade, most businesses in the smaller communities, particularly those associated with cotton, never recovered from the postwar drop in prices. Better roads assured that, when cotton prices rose again, the work of processing the cotton crop went to the larger communities lying outside the Camp Hood lands and along the rail lines. And smaller shops and stores could not compete with the selection and diversity of products offered by their counterparts in the city.

After cotton prices collapsed at the close of the Great War, the following year saw a five-million-acre reduction in cotton farming across the South. But the landowner and tenant, on average, had weathered such reverses before, and they would again. Low prices only hardened the connection between

cash income and cotton. Banks that survived the drop in prices pressured landowners to repay loans or lose their farms. Landowners turned to their tenant farmers and told them to plant every available acre in cotton. On the other side of the coin, smaller gin operators (including many in the Camp Hood lands) suffered a one-two punch—depressed prices in 1920 and the cutback in production in 1921—that forced many out of business. Fully a dozen cotton gins in Coryell County went out of business in the five years after the war.

A bad crop year brought tense relations among bankers, landowners, and tenant farmers. Conditions were primed for a fight, and into the breach stepped the Ku Klux Klan. Revived in 1913 as an insurance cooperative to compete with the Woodmen of the World, the Klan gained national attention from D. W. Griffith's 1915 cinematic masterpiece, *The Birth of a Nation*, which told of the post-Civil War establishment of the Klan. Although residents in the Fort Hood area can recall Klan activity before the war, the greatest interest came in the early 1920s when the national headquarters moved from Georgia to Dallas, and the Blackland cotton regions of central Texas became a hotbed of Klan activity. Bell County, and Belton and Temple in particular, joined in the upsurge of interest in the Ku Klux Klan that occurred throughout Texas and the nation during the 1920s.<sup>10</sup>

During this period, the Klan purchased the Midway Fairgrounds, located halfway between Belton and Temple along the interurban tracks, and used it as a central meeting point for Klan groups throughout the county. The Klan held rallies on the grounds for several years and marched in full Klan regalia in Fourth of July parades in Temple and Belton. In her essay on Belton for *The Story of Bell County*, Lena Armstrong addresses the rise of the Klan in Belton, noting that many people remained wary, "and often neighbors, suspecting a friend or neighbor of being a member, did not talk openly about it, but whispered."<sup>11</sup> Coryell County historians make no mention of Klan activity, although some activity, at least in the Blackland region adjacent to McLennan County, probably took place. Residents of Killeen made sure African Americans stayed away. The first black person anyone could recall in Killeen arrived from east Texas during the construction boom, completely "unaware of the town's attitude." Oran Raney gave him work in his gas station but "locked him in [the back room] at night for his own safety, which proved unnecessary as there never was any trouble."<sup>12</sup>

The Klan put up candidates for governor in 1920 and senator in 1924. Both were narrowly defeated. Governor Pat Neff, firmly anti-Klan, worked



diligently to reduce its influence in state politics, as did many church leaders and newspaper publishers. They were substantially aided in these efforts by rising cotton prices and good weather. A record crop harvested in the fall of 1923 came with a restored market price of thirty cents per pound.<sup>13</sup> Organized Klan activity became less visible, and the currents of hatred and racism the Klan plowed up were mashed underground by good times. Everyone who could planted cotton in 1924. The economic boom all along the East Coast and industrial belt, coupled with a reinvigorated European economy demanding ever more cotton, clearly indicated the trend would continue for a long while. However, sad sacks in the Agriculture Department and killjoy editors of some farm journals failed to recognize the golden opportunity. For years they published articles and made speeches urging decreased reliance on cotton and a greater diversification of crops, along with crop rotation and contour plowing.<sup>14</sup> But their necks were not on the line. They didn't owe the bank for mortgage payments due since 1921. Cotton was king again.

Farmers on Camp Hood lands grew less cotton than those in other areas of the county. Farmers north of Killeen, around Sparta and Sugar Loaf, had small farms along Cowhouse Creek averaging one hundred acres in size, of which only twenty-five acres were usually cultivated. Out of that amount, only ten to fifteen acres went for cotton; the rest was subsistence crops.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, planters in Bell and Coryell Counties joined farmers throughout Texas in planting cotton on a record number of acres in 1924, as did every other state in the cotton South. Although the glut kicked seven cents off the previous year's price, lower prices only spurred farmers to plant even more acres the following year to make up the difference. The gamble paid off handsomely for every state except Texas.

In 1925, Texas suffered one of its worst droughts on record. Farmers postponed planting spring corn, waiting for rains to prepare their soil for seed, but time and again storm clouds would gather and roll ominously across parched lands, leaving nothing below but their fleeting shadows. February turned to May without any appreciable rainfall. Those who had planted cotton watched in frustration as water-starved seedlings broke soil and tried to put out bolls on plants that stood a mere six inches high. By July, even the grasslands had shriveled from the parching sun, and stockmen searched for alternate food sources for starving herds. Residents in Ocker remembered that by summer's end, "even weeds failed to grow."<sup>16</sup> Resignedly, cotton farmers who had banked so much on the 1925 crop looked for a silver lining,

declaring that at least the drought had annihilated the boll weevil. This was little comfort, as newspapers predicted record yields for cotton elsewhere and higher prices due to the Texas drought. Old-timers in Coryell County recalled the drought-ridden 1880s, and everyone prayed.

Rains returned in autumn 1925, too late to salvage crops but hard enough to threaten winter wheat and corn. Winter temperatures brought an additional burden of record lows, freezing many crops planted in late autumn. Fortunately, good weather returned the following year, with ample rains and decent temperatures. As brutal as the drought of 1925 proved, it was too brief for the lessons of diversification, crop rotation, and contour plowing to gain a foothold in the farmer's consciousness.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the 1920s, the same gamble that paid off in years past was played again and again, with varying success. All the chips on cotton, and let the dice roll.

### **The Great Depression**

If the prosperity of the 1920s took a long time to impact the Camp Hood lands, so too did the Depression of the 1930s. For the first few weeks, many farmers viewed the stock market crash in October 1929 and the ensuing Wall Street panic as they had the Panic of 1907—an isolated event that would mainly affect banks and stockbrokers along the East Coast, while little else would change. But American finances had substantially changed over the last two decades. Fueled by a postwar boom and a loosening of credit, more urban, middle-class families found themselves with extra money, which many used to “play the market.” By the end of the decade, more families than ever before, many more than could honestly afford such risks, were inextricably linked to the stock market. When the bottom dropped out in 1929 and margin calls arrived in the mail, families in cities across the country decided to “tighten their belts.” At first, this meant cutting back on luxuries, then unnecessary expenses, and finally essentials like food for lunch or meat for dinner. Finally, government agents appeared on Movietone news reels pleading with the movie audience to spend their extra cash, because spending created jobs.

Few, if any, farmers in the Camp Hood lands had surplus cash to invest in the 1920s stock market. Most everyone had their fortunes tied to the soil, especially cotton. By the close of 1929, cotton prices slumped below eighteen cents a pound, but most brokers had purchased and shipped their orders well before the October 23 crash revealed its true depth. Ten months would elapse



before the next cotton crop hit the market, and farmers, recalling the 1920 cotton crash and the third-year rebound, believed anything could happen. Hope was sustained as long as the weather held. In 1930, good weather prevailed, producing a solid cotton crop, but one unsupported by prices that continued to slide. By now, the crash in New York had made its way to European markets, which dropped in like fashion. The sharp cut in the demand for new clothes in Europe, as well as in America, produced a similar round of "belt-tightening." Thousands of cotton bales sold in 1930 still stood on Houston docks in 1931 when the next crop began arriving. By now, cotton prices had reached impossible lows. Beginning with the modest high of eighteen cents a pound, the 1931 crop closed at five cents a pound, lower than the lowest price of 1920. But even then, more bales than ever remained on the docks.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the drought of 1925, this hard time was here to stay.

The crash doomed the cotton industry in Coryell County, and with it the predominance of tenant farming. Farmers across Texas quickly pulled forty thousand acres of cotton out of production, and by 1945, less than one-fifth of the acreage remained in production from the high set in 1924. Buildings and land in Coryell County lost 37 percent of their value during the six years from 1929 to 1935. And Model Ts purchased in good times stood on blocks for the lack of gasoline money; a mule could live on corn, a car couldn't.

Having less to start with, most farmers lost less when times turned hard. Suddenly all the advantages of urban life came back to haunt the major cities, wracked with massive unemployment and bread lines. Families in Killeen recall handing food to families who were leaving the big cities, living out of their cars and headed somewhere, anywhere, that promised work. Floy Blankinship Byrd remembered, "They would trade their watches, jewelry, and other possessions for gas to get farther up the road."<sup>19</sup> Lawyers and other nonmedical professionals left midsized towns like Copperas Cove and Killeen and moved to Temple, or Dallas, where their prospects were better. Some farmers even took in city folks and let them work out their room and board doing farm chores. None were accustomed to the hard labor of farm life, and few could provide the productivity and stamina needed to survive on a farm. It has always been easier to be poor on the farm than in the city. Interviews with long-time residents reveal that few went hungry during the Depression, and most don't recall life's turning unbearably harsh, primarily because they already lived a very self-sufficient existence. They were accustomed to raising the meat and vegetables they ate while trading labor and surplus farm products for those few items they needed.

One farmer's motto sums it up: "Why would any self-respecting farmer want to spend hard-earned cash on products you could produce yourself?"

During the 1930s, farmers reverted to the crops and methods used decades earlier in subsistence farming, and the diversification long urged by farm agents became a necessity for survival. Vegetable gardens, table foods, canning, and preserving supplemented meager purchases of salt, sugar, flour, and coffee. As long as the weather held, enough food could be grown and served on the table. Families joined beef and pork clubs, taking turns butchering one of their cows and dividing the meat among participating families, eliminating the need for the local butcher.

In the years immediately following the crash, President Herbert Hoover's conservative, probusiness solutions failed to stem the tide of farm foreclosures, bankruptcies, and declining prices. Farm subsidy bills never made it out of the legislature without Hoover threatening to veto them. Finally, legislators stopped trying. If Texas farmers disliked Hoover's approach, they had only themselves to blame. They switched party allegiance in 1928 to support the Republican nominee because Hoover was a staunch prohibitionist and a Protestant, and the Democratic candidate, Alfred Smith of New York, was neither. Four years later, President Roosevelt uncorked the prohibition bottle, bringing taverns and saloons back to metropolitan Texas, but by then the issue mattered less than finding a solution to the nation's ills. Roosevelt attacked problems with a burst of energy and optimism that gave Texas farmers reason to hope, even though his first inclination was similar to that of Hoover's; he believed in conservative, responsible allocation of federal funds. But by 1935, he was spending at a faster rate than any peacetime president before him, and the first glimmer of hope was making its way to the newspapers.<sup>20</sup>

Few of the big relief programs made it to rural Bell or Coryell County in any organized fashion. The National Youth Administration built camp sites and roadside parks in other areas, the Civilian Conservation Corps built parks and the Works Progress Administration constructed dams in other counties. Even the much-needed road improvements failed to gain much interest with the White House, since it was believed that modern road equipment could do the work better, faster, and with less manpower.<sup>21</sup> Above all, Roosevelt wanted projects that required sizable amounts of manual labor, and road repairs didn't qualify.

Rural electrification, on the other hand, was a project Roosevelt and the Texas legislators vigorously supported. The Depression did indeed have a bright

# SOCIAL LIFE

"Entertainment primarily was neighborliness—visiting among people not just in town but out in the rural areas."<sup>1</sup> About two or three nights a week, people would go from one house to another and play dominos or forty-two, a variation of dominos. Mrs. Winifred Bell recalled the games as being "very exciting."<sup>2</sup> Kerosene lamps or candles furnished the only indoor lighting on dark days and at night for many decades.<sup>3</sup> John Gail Edwards can still imitate his father yelling up at the kids, "Don't you burn that coal oil, it's too expensive. Put that light out."<sup>4</sup>



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

"Neighbors visited a whole lot more than they do now because they . . . didn't have anything else to do except visit with each other . . ." said H. Roy Renyolds of Killeen.<sup>5</sup> As Hazel Graham Wilkinson looked back she remembered, "we enjoyed the games that children played together. Annie Over, a little baseball, and we'd go swimming when we could. We didn't get to fish much. My dad usually had jobs for us."<sup>6</sup>

Saturdays were for shopping in town. Families hitched the wagon and headed down the road with surplus farm products like eggs and chickens to trade for needed dry goods. Then they'd visit. "They'd come in and . . . they'd gather around the stores and listen to (stories), visit, buy their week's supply of

groceries."<sup>7</sup> In the autumn, during the ginning season, farmers would gather at the local gin.

On Saturday nights, they'd have what they called social gatherings. Neighbors would take turns holding events in their homes, playing dominos, pulling candy, roasting wieners, and churning homemade ice cream.<sup>8</sup> "They'd have a group of families get together and have an ice cream supper and everybod'd (sic) make a freezer of home(m)ade ice cream," recalled H. Roy Renyolds.<sup>9</sup>

Molly Duncan remembered, "nearly every Saturday night, someone would open up their home and take the furniture all out of one room, and we'd dance, and you didn't have to have an invitation; if you heard about it, you were invited, you went."<sup>10</sup>

"Nobody was allowed to dance," Mrs. Winifred Bell explained. Previous dances had included alcohol, and sometimes led to fistfights, so alcohol was forbidden and the elders opposed dancing of any sort. "We had a way of getting around things like you kids do now." Young folks played "ring" plays, instead. Someone who could sing would act as caller, and the rest moved around the floor, as in square dancing. Actually, "it was the same thing only we didn't call it dancing."<sup>11</sup> Sometimes several families would join in the ring plays, chipping in

money to pay for fiddle players and other musicians.<sup>12</sup> Molly Duncan remembered that "older people would go, and they'd sit and watch the younger people."<sup>13</sup> After calling a ring dance on a Saturday night, Lucille Sharp Scrivner "could barely speak the next morning."<sup>14</sup>

Sunday afternoons after church, the men would play baseball in the lot. "Mama wasn't very happy about that because she would have to keep us kids in the house," recalled Annie Lois Bond. "She was afraid we would get hit in the head with a baseball. When they were playing ball, Daddy played on the team; we kids would look through the window and watch them play."<sup>15</sup> "Girls and boys played softball," explained Barney Duncan. "Of course, some played

baseball, too, some of the boys did, you know . . . . (B)ut softball, you didn't really have to have a glove, you know, it was soft enough."<sup>16</sup>

In the spring and summer, families would hold large picnics. Young ladies would make box suppers, and the young men would bid on them during auctions. The young man who placed the winning bid got to eat with the girl who made the lunch. Proceeds went to the school or a charity.

Others would go out to the river on camping trips, sometimes in a Model T. "Well, we'd go out on the river . . . and . . . we'd stay three or four days. Camping out at night and settin(g) out lines—catching fish, having fish fry's (*sic*) and . . . that was the entertainment and nobody thought they needed anything else."<sup>17</sup>

In hot summer months, families would open all the doors and windows to let the maximum amount of air flow, then hang wet sheets in the doorways. The breeze would strike the wet sheet and evaporate the water, pulling some of the heat out of the air, bringing a faint cool to the room.<sup>18</sup> The Goodwin children of Stampede carried wet burlap sacks with them as they walked to Cowhouse Creek for a swim in "Basket Hole," laying the sacks on the hot sand to protect their feet.<sup>19</sup>

"We had quilting parties," remembered Mrs. Winifred Bell. "We put the frames up to the ceiling of the house. Most of the houses didn't have ceilings. It had rafters and the wood (quilting) frames were tied to the rafter and the quilt was tacked to it. And we would let it down during the daytime. And all youngsters were taught to quilt by the time you were eight or nine years old. The quilts would be let down during the day and we would quilt. And all day you walked around them



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

getting to the kitchen or whatever you wanted to go. And then at night the quilt frames were rolled up, lower than head high. And then the neighbors would come in and quilt and help too. Help each other. And every girl was expected to have at least a dozen hand pieced, hand quilted quilts before she got of marrying age. I do, I did, and so did my sister."<sup>20</sup>

"We had a community Christmas tree," remembered Mrs. Bell. "We didn't have Christmas trees in each home. We had one Christmas tree usually at the church or at the school, and everybody for miles around on Christmas Eve brought all the gifts and put them under this tree. And one man in the community was Santa Claus and dispensed the gifts. And . . . I don't know how we did this but we decorated the tree with real life (*sic*) burning candles. Why it never burned the school or the church I don't know . . . (T)he Santa Claus always called out the name of every person that the gift was to go to. And everyone gave gifts to everyone in the community. We didn't get a lot of gifts, two or three."<sup>21</sup> "We got fruit only at Christmas time . . . (D)ad always bought a bushel basket of apples and a bushel basket of oranges. And during Christmas we could have all the apples and oranges."<sup>22</sup>

side; it put the light bulb in many farm houses throughout central Texas, and the program even reached a few homes on the Camp Hood lands. But telephone service outstripped electrification in the most remote areas, and when the Army came in 1942, a large percentage of homes were still without electricity. Families contented themselves with listening to battery-powered radios (or ones powered by a wind generator), washing clothes in gas-powered washing machines (the latest rage in 1936), and reading magazines by kerosene lamps at night.

Aside from electrical cooperatives, the primary interaction in the 1930s between those living on Camp Hood lands and the federal government was through farm loans, price supports, and education. The advice farm agents had distributed for years on a voluntary basis now became linked to much-needed government subsidies. Pamphlets on crop rotation and scientific farming went from optional to compulsory reading, and this time farmers across Texas were ready to learn. The 1935 agricultural census showed a decided shift away from cotton to more food crops like corn, wheat, and soybeans. But government price supports and farm subsidies could not continue indefinitely. The only way farmers could stand on their own feet was through higher prices at the market. With demand at an all-time low, the only recourse was to decrease the supply—that is, cut back on production of milk, corn, wheat, and meat products. If the farmers and ranchers would not voluntarily reduce production, the government would step in.

"The worst memory of the depression occurred when the government subsidized farmers to destroy animals," recalled Ruth McFarland of Palo Alto, who was a teenager at the time.<sup>22</sup> The Agriculture Adjustment Act of May 1933 provided financial support for landowners who plowed under crops to help limit oversupply, and paid a flat rate for excess cattle culled from the herd. Farm agents would call for cattle reductions, and ranchers in the surrounding area would bring the prescribed number of cows into a central pen, sometimes a rancher's feed lot. "I'll never forget the scene of all those men standing around waiting, not talking or smiling or anything," recalled Kyle Hillard. "It was pretty grim." Tommy Mill of Trimmier remembered taking twenty head of his father's cattle to a rodeo arena. "The sharpshooters sat on a fence . . . shooting the cattle right between the eyes." "We were ranching in Maxdale," said Zell Hunt, "when the government got to our place in 1934. They killed the cows with a .22-caliber automatic rifle, but when the man started killing the goats with an ax [my husband] John just told him to shoot the goats too or get out of the pen and leave them alone."<sup>23</sup>

The government paid about five dollars a cow and left the rest to the owner, who could dispose of animals in one of three ways: "eat 'em, can 'em, or bury 'em."<sup>24</sup> Somewhere in town, although no one can remember exactly where, Killeen had a canning plant sponsored by the Texas Relief Commission and supervised by Eula Bacon. Animals killed for the price stabilization program, or other animals killed for winter food, could be canned or turned into chili, pork sausages, hamburger, or sliced steaks. The same facility also canned peaches, pears, and sweet potatoes. A portion of the finished product went to the Commission to pay for canning, and the farmer or rancher received the rest.

It was in these difficult times that Frank Mayborn, editor of the *Temple Herald*, found his calling. More than anything, he wanted to find a modern, progressive way to bring Bell County out of the quagmire, and his best solution was landing a government contract for a federally sponsored program or construction project. In the mid-1930s, he traveled to Washington, D.C., to press Congress and the Works Progress Administration to build a dam on the Leon River, a project the Army Corp of Engineers eventually started in 1949.<sup>25</sup> Whenever possible, he pressed for New Deal programs, conservation projects, and parks to be located in Bell County. Four years later, he became president of the Temple Chamber of Commerce, and as such created an Industrial Committee to persuade businesses to locate in Temple and Bell County. After his term as Chamber of Commerce president ended, Mayborn chaired the new Industrial Committee, traveling around the state and region lobbying for Temple business interests.<sup>26</sup>

His efforts to bring a magnesium plant to Temple in 1940 put him in touch with an ever-more-powerful circle of Washington players. He reestablished contact with Oveta Culp Hobby, native of Bell County and wife of Will Hobby, former Texas governor and publisher of the *Houston Post*, who in turn introduced him to Jesse Jones, chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Committee as well as chair of the Texas Centennial Committee. Mayborn made close contacts with Santa Fe Railroad executives like Jim Reinhold, who accompanied him when he called on U.S. congressmen for support. And along with his old friend Congressman "Bob" Poage, Mayborn came to know Senator Tom Connally. When all of the work came to nothing (Austin got the magnesium plant), many of his associates quit the Industrial Committee in frustration. In January 1941, Mayborn changed the name to War Projects Committee and forged ahead with the remaining members. The coming year would be better, he thought.



# HOUSE WORK

"We started working around the house very young," remembered Hazel Graham Wilkinson. "We were taught very young to make our beds and help with the dishes and sweep the floors. Just the usual housework."<sup>1</sup>

"My job was to gather the eggs every day, approximately three dozen chicken eggs," remembered Mrs. Winifred Bell. "One job I always got out of, my sisters had to milk the cows. And I always pretended I simply could not learn to milk. Because I did not want to, because I knew if I learned then come sundown I would have to go milk and I would rather have a date and go roller skating or go to the movies."<sup>2</sup>

Cooking was done with wood, and each family usually provided its own wood from the cedar and live oak groves on the homestead.<sup>3</sup> "I remember . . . our mother would take a huge baking pan that fit in the oven in the wood stove,

and bake sweet potatoes," said Mary Edwards Groves. "It would be mid-afternoon snack for the guys that were working in our fields. (She would) carry that pan of baked potatoes down there in the middle of the afternoon."<sup>4</sup>

"What amazed me about some of the food we had in those days, we had . . . onions along the banks of the Cowhouse, and when they would really get good, we had one little area that daddy would always close off because he didn't want the milk cow to get in there," remembered Mrs. Groves. "The onions would get nice size, and I've seen him come in with a tow sack just as full as he could get it with those onions. . . . (M)other would take those onions in a huge skillet, and she would make cooked onions for that family of six, and boy I can just taste those onions right now." Mrs. Groves's sister, Hope Edwards Turner, added that their mother also took "a mixture of corn meal and hot water and sometimes a few of those onions and bacon drippings, and made a mush."<sup>5</sup>

Sausage was stored in deep stoneware crocks with warm lard poured around sausage patties to seal out the air, then a second layer of

patties laid upon the first and covered with more lard, and so forth until reaching the top.<sup>6</sup> Summer months were devoted to canning, or "putting up," the fruits and vegetables. Glass jars were sealed with thin disk-like lids with a special rubber seal.

Cracklings of the lard became the main ingredient for making soap, until "P and G" (Proctor and Gamble) powdered



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

soap became readily available. Many wash cloths and tea towels came from coupons printed on the bottom of "P and G" boxes, while glassware and tableware came from the bottom of oatmeal boxes. Gasoline stations also sometimes distributed glassware with a full tank of gasoline.<sup>7</sup>

The ice man delivered blocks of ice twice a week during the summer. Each family had a square sign with numbers printed in large type along each side—25, 50, 75, and 100. The family placed the sign in their front window with the number of pounds they needed that day on top. No one locked their doors then. The iceman would let himself in the kitchen door, slide the ice in the galvanized holder at the back of the icebox, and take the money left on top of the box.<sup>8</sup> John Gail Edwards recalled the iceman who came to the Edwardses' farm from Killeen. "He had some kind of old stripped down pickup, maybe a Chevrolet or Model T, was what he brought that ice in. He had it wrapped up in old quilts and stuff like that. He probably brought us 50 pounds twice a week."<sup>9</sup>

Most homes had windmill-powered wells to draw water for domestic use. Water was carried in tin pails from the well to the kitchen. In later years, some homes had water piped into the kitchens, but even then they still usually had only a dipper bucket and wash pan, instead of a modern sink. Bathing was done in a large washtub with water heated on the cookstove.<sup>10</sup>

Hope Turner remembered that her mother washed clothes in Cowhouse Creek because



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Wilma Colvin Edwards

there "wasn't enough water at the house." If there wasn't a tree or fence to hang them on, "she's lay 'em on the rocks of the gravel bars. And we'd go swimming in Cowhouse."<sup>11</sup>

Most of the family's clothing was hand made. Bill Northham's mother, in Sparta, made underwear for him and his brother out of flour sacks. Girls polished their patent leather shoes using a biscuit. Boys wore overalls year-round and often went barefooted in the summer.<sup>12</sup> "During the Depression (we) wore hand-me-down dresses. But we didn't mind, I don't reckon. I know I didn't," said Mrs. Winifred Bell. "After the flour was used up then we ripped up the flour sacks and washed out the print on them and made dresses. And they were just as pretty as the cotton dresses you buy now. And we made window curtains, tablecloths, pillowcases, and boy('s) shirts. Everything was made out of flour sacks."<sup>13</sup>

Molly Duncan recalled that her mother "made a lot of clothes at home; 'course we . . . worked in overalls, we bought those. She made dresses for us, and then . . . we bought some, ordered some from Sears and Roebuck." It took about five to six days for the mailman to bring an order from Sears.<sup>14</sup>



- 1942 U.S. Army opens land office in Gatesville (January 15)  
 Brigadier General Andrew Bruce designates initial boundary of Camp Hood, ca. 80,000 acres (March 6)  
 First of three suicides on Camp Hood lands occurs (March 9)  
 Deadline for first evacuations of Camp Hood lands (March 21)  
 Deadline for evacuation of western portions of Camp Hood (April 20)  
 Troops begin arriving at Camp Hood from Camp Meade, Maryland (April 22)  
 Deadline for evacuation of eastern portions of Camp Hood (May 1)  
 Officers' Training School begins in Gatesville (May 4)  
 U.S. Army announces expansion of Camp Hood by 28,000 acres (July)  
 Official dedication of Camp Hood, now 108,000 acres (September 18)  
 U.S. Army announces expansion of Camp Hood by 35,000 acres (September 25)  
 U.S. Army expands Camp Hood by another 12,000 acres (January)  
 North Camp Hood dedicated (May 29), camp now 160,000 acres
- 1945 Franklin D. Roosevelt dies, Harry S. Truman becomes president (April 12)  
 Victory in Europe (May 8)  
 Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan (August 6)  
 Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan (August 9)  
 Victory in Japan (August 15)
- 1947 Camp Hood soldiers assist residents in Texas City after ship explosion kills five hundred
- 1948 Camp Hood becomes permanent facility and is renamed Fort Hood  
 Truman reelected president
- 1949 Construction on Belton Dam and Reservoir begins  
 North American Treaty Organization (NATO) established
- 1950 Korean Conflict begins with North Korea crossing 38th parallel (June 25)
- 1951 First Army Division reactivated and moved to Fort Hood  
 Second Army Division transferred to NATO in Europe
- 1952 Dwight D. Eisenhower elected president
- 1953 U.S. Army expands Fort Hood, adding 50,000 acres of land around Belton Lake (July)  
 Fort Hood troops assist Waco residents after tornado devastates downtown (May 11)
- 1954 Fourth Army Division reactivated  
 Belton Dam completed
- 2000 Fort Hood, now 217,337 acres, is headquarters of the III Armored Corps and home to over 42,000 active military personnel

# LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK 1942-2000

## Acquisition by the U.S. Government

**T**he announcement on January 12, 1942, brought an abrupt end to six months of speculation concerning the location of the Army's new antitank training camp. For those living between Gatesville and Killeen, it meant they would have to leave land their parents and grandparents had worked. It meant abandoning farms and ranches and moving to another part of the county or to town. In short, it spelled the end of an era. Moreover, the announcement marked yet another transition in who would occupy the land, just as Brigadier General George Brooke's 1849 letter outlining the location of forts through the middle of Texas had marked the transition from Native American occupation to one dominated by Anglo-Americans and Europeans.

On the Monday following the announcement, the Eighth Army Engineer Division opened an Army Land Office in Gatesville. By February, agents had acquired title to 22,000 acres and options for another 45,000.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Colonel Andrew D. Bruce gave talks to gatherings of farmers and ranchers about why the Army needed their land and the benefits it would provide for the men in uniform. Bruce even got the War Department to name the camp in honor of Confederate General John Bell Hood.<sup>2</sup> By March 6, Bruce set the final boundaries for the Camp and called for the first set of evacuations, effective within fifteen days. With the passage of the Second War Powers Act expected any day, the government had enhanced its power of eminent domain needed to effect the transition in the shortest time possible. No longer would they have to wait for a perfected title before forcing an evacuation. The deed transfer went from voluntary to compulsory, the evacuation from uncertain to inescapable. Facing the absoluteness of their

fate, three farmers, driven to despair, took their own lives rather than leave their land.<sup>3</sup>

The government cleared the land in stages, with a notification process that made an already complicated situation all the more confusing. Mrs. Bessie Brookshire Smith recalled the way her family received its notification. "The Army sent men around to the homes of landowners with information, instructions which differed from neighbor to neighbor and from day to day."<sup>4</sup> Standard procedure stated that last notification of an evacuation deadline should be through the local newspaper, but that was not always the case. "We received a letter on Friday in March 1942 that said we had two weeks to relocate," recalled Doris Allman Edwards. "Two days later, on Sunday, an Army truck with two soldiers backed up to our front door. Said they came to move us out. Of course we were shocked."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the confusion, local leaders put the best face on a hard situation. The editor for the *Killeen Herald* reported, "The exodus of our people is a great sacrifice for our country, but all are taking it with good will and fine spirit."<sup>6</sup> Decades later, Hazel Wilkinson echoed that assessment, saying, "It was hard because you didn't have much time. . . . We managed, but it was hard on my in-laws. They were old and had a really nice farm. . . . It was hard, but they all managed. We had to support the war, do things to support our troops."<sup>7</sup>

Tracts where troops would camp—near Killeen, Copperas Cove, and Cowhouse Creek—were among the first to be evacuated, effective March 21. In late March, twenty-seven landowners in the western portion of the land received an evacuation deadline of midnight April 20, two days before the first transport companies would arrive. A few weeks later, landowners on the eastern portion of the land received their evacuation notice, effective May 1, 1942.<sup>8</sup>

In the end, 832 tracts of land changed hands: 525 were purchased outright, while another 302 were obtained through a Declaration of Taking.<sup>9</sup> Every landowner received compensation, as guaranteed by the Constitution, whether the land was obtained through voluntary cooperation or mandatory evacuation. Disputes, when they occurred, usually turned on the question of how much was paid and when it was paid. And then there was always the issue of time: too much change in so little time. So abruptly had the Army moved from favoring the Valley Mills site to the Killeen site that, for months thereafter, the War Department continued to list Bosque County, not Coryell, as the second county covered by Camp Hood, wrecking havoc on the distribution of rationed food commodities like sugar.<sup>10</sup>

Evacuees had three basic choices—go to the nearest town, rent or buy a new farm somewhere else in Bell or Coryell County, or move to another county to start again. Although no one has compiled statistics on the movements of those leaving Camp Hood lands, from anecdotal evidence it appears that most remained in the area, either moving to one of the outlying towns or re-establishing themselves on nearby farmlands. A few who lived in what is now the impact zone were able to physically move their houses into Killeen, and many of them lived in reconstructed communities set along one or two streets.

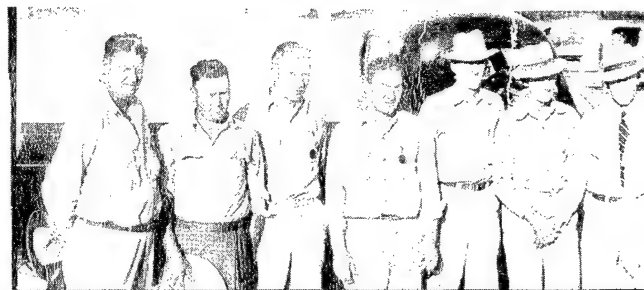
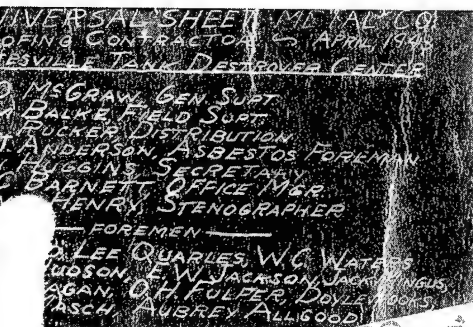
Frank Mayborn, the man who diligently worked to bring the antitank training camp to central Texas and was the person most responsible for moving the site from Valley Mills to Killeen, did not have to resolve the problems that rose in the wake of the announcement. His good friend Congressman Poage bore the brunt of that labor. Poage's office received dozens of letters—heartbreaking letters from constituents who could not find a place to live after being forced from their lands. He learned about farms cut in half by the camp boundary line, with the government acquiring the farmer's house, water wells, and streambeds and expecting the owner to continue farming the less-usable portion or search to find a buyer.<sup>11</sup> Poage heard from people who still had not received payment for their land months or even years after their evacuation. In one case, he tried to expedite at least partial payment for a 133-acre farm; the money had been withheld over a 2-acre dispute in the deed description. He had to explain to others why they were forced to pay taxes on the assessed value of their land before the government paid them for the land itself.<sup>12</sup> Complaints also were received from landowners who could not understand why their land, with virtually identical characteristics to their neighbor's, got a 15 to 25 percent lower valuation per acre.

Farmers and ranchers who refused to accept the government's offer found themselves in the federal court in Waco. Of course, in a dispute of this nature the landowner was the defendant, and liable for all court costs.<sup>13</sup> Some who witnessed the court's actions suspected that Judge Charles A. Boynton had already formed an opinion about the cases before the parties ever arrived in court.<sup>14</sup> Poage concurred, "The federal court never gave them any real hearing." In retrospect, Poage understood the tribulations of his constituents in Coryell County, estimating that the government undervalued land by about 30 percent.<sup>15</sup>

Coryell County caught more than its share of problems. By far the largest percentage of the land taken for Camp Hood came from Coryell County, displacing about seven hundred families whose taxes helped fund roads and services.<sup>16</sup> These families were replaced by the federal government, which contributed nothing directly to county coffers.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, three of the four cities that benefited the most from increased population and consumer spending were in Bell County. Only Copperas Cove lay inside Coryell County, and over time, its population would exceed that of Gatesville.

When the first contingent of troops arrived at Camp Hood in April they went to Gatesville instead of Killeen. With four times the population of Killeen, Gatesville was more established and offered the Army better facilities for training classes. On May 4, 1942, Officers' Training School classes began in the Gatesville City Hall, where 250 officers learned the latest in tank warfare and antitank tactics. A month later, a second Officers' Training School opened in Gatesville. While the officers posted in private residences in Gatesville, the soldiers kept arriving each week by train and bus, and camp officials set up tent cities anywhere nature made a flat space. Along Cowhouse Creek, just

One of many Camp Hood construction crews, April 1943 (courtesy of Bell County Museum, Belton, Texas).

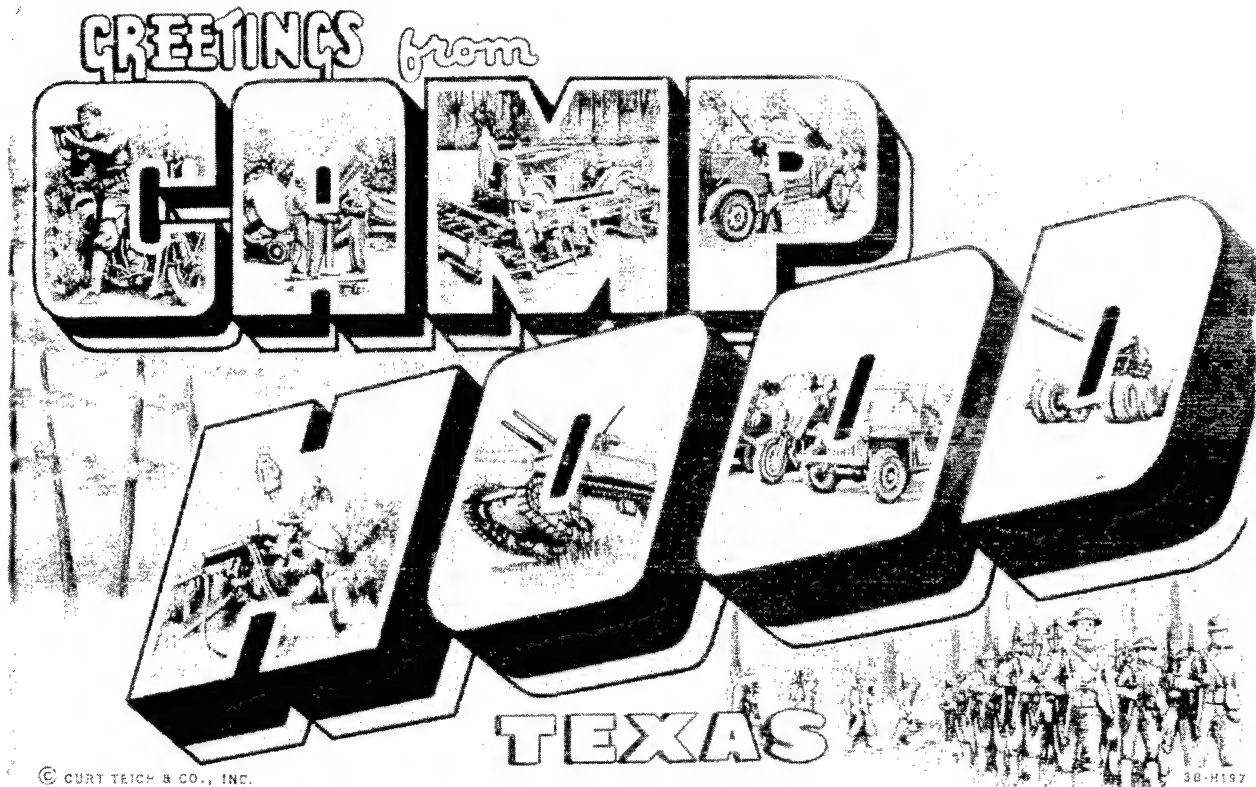


north of Killeen, soldiers bivouacked throughout Camp Hood. Near Copperas Cove, a huge encampment spread across the H. K. Clem property. As a teenage soda jerk in the Baker Drug Store, Anice Thompson Vance recalled that "every evening those guys would walk into town, or get there however they could. The sidewalks were jammed. From behind the soda counter I could look across the store and see nothing but an ocean of khaki caps."<sup>18</sup>

But the real boom took place down the road in Killeen. Before the war, Killeen had a population of around twelve hundred. Once the camp was established, as the gateway to the camp and closest town in Bell County, Killeen became home to sixty-three hundred construction workers hired to build the central headquarters for Camp Hood. Problems began almost immediately. T. H. Minor, president of the First State Bank of Killeen (the area's only bank), had a falling out with Colonel Bruce that ultimately prevented Killeen from receiving a certificate as a Defense Area.<sup>19</sup> In the absence of this designation, local businesses could not receive priority for scarce or rationed building materials needed to construct apartments, restaurants, and entertainment facilities—the very items that the Army had at the top of its priority list. Half







Postcard from Camp Hood, postmarked August 24, 1943.

of the workers were forced to live in trailers or tents. Minor allegedly told Colonel Bruce, "Colonel, you run the camp, and I'll run the town."<sup>20</sup> This early disagreement soured the relationship between the Army and Killeen business leaders, causing Colonel Bruce to declare, implausibly, that Temple was the gateway to Camp Hood. His preference for Temple over Killeen or even Belton influenced policy makers in Washington for some time.<sup>21</sup>

Planners soon realized that Camp Hood's initial size of 80,000 acres would not be enough. In July 1942, the Army called for an additional 28,000 acres to be cleared. Eight months after that announcement, the Army officially dedicated Camp Hood on September 18, 1942, with the son of General John B. Hood and a string of top brass in attendance. The camp now covered a total of 108,000 acres. No sooner did the top brass return to Washington, D.C., than on September 25 they announced plans for enlarging Camp Hood by another 35,000 acres for the Replacement and Basic Training Center. The scramble to purchase land, clear titles, and move families began again in an area directly south of old Fort Gates, now called North Fort Hood. While the Replacement Center was still under construction, the Army requested 12,000 more acres in January 1943. By the time the Replacement Center dedication

ceremony took place, on May 29, 1943, Camp Hood covered 160,000 acres—twice its original size, making it one of the largest army training facilities in the United States.<sup>22</sup>

### **Camp Hood Becomes Fort Hood**

After World War II, the Army sought ways to combine and consolidate units. Some were decommissioned altogether, while others were moved to new locations. Men and machines from the Twentieth Armored Division arrived from Camp Cooke, California, as part of this redistribution, followed by the administrative core for the Second Armored Division. A year after V-E Day, the two units merged into one and began training as a single unit, the Second Armored Division. North Camp Hood was closed, and even with the arrival of several battalions from the Fourth Army unit, the base barely topped fourteen thousand troops in residence—an 85 percent reduction in population.<sup>23</sup> Much of the country feared a postwar recession similar to the one that followed World War I; some even thought the Great Depression might return. As history shows, those fears were largely unfounded, with the possible exception of businesses and towns surrounding military camps throughout the country. In Bell and Coryell Counties, the farmer's dependence on cotton had shifted to the shopkeeper's dependence on the military.

After creation of the Second Armored Division, its final disposition was still uncertain. Mayborn and other city leaders applied pressure to assure that the division would stay at Camp Hood and that Camp Hood would be designated by the War Department as a permanent facility. For two long years, Killeen, Gatesville, and the other towns clustered around the camp fretted over this important decision. In the fall of 1948, Congress renewed the Selective Service Act, requiring young men to give two years of military service. The Act also set the size of each service branch and designated permanent facilities. Camp Hood became Fort Hood.

After this, the entire facility underwent a complete review. Old wooden structures were replaced by new brick buildings, and recreational facilities such as baseball diamonds and tennis courts were erected. North Camp Hood reopened for use by units of the Army Reserve and the National Guard, which trained there in the summer months. The underground aquifer could not provide enough water for future needs of Fort Hood and the surrounding



cities, so in 1954, the Army Corps of Engineers completed Belton Dam as part of the larger Brazos River Control Project. The waters the dam impounded flooded the lower Cowhouse Creek and Leon River, submerging several of the older communities in Bell County. But for the first time, Bell and Coryell Counties had a reliable source of water and cheap, dependable power close at hand. The final limitations on growth for both civilian and military projects had been overcome.<sup>24</sup>

As the Korean Conflict slogged through its second year, the importance of maintaining a full contingent of mobile armored units became increasingly clear. As a result, the Army reactivated the First Armored Division in 1951 and moved its headquarters from Fort Knox, Kentucky, to Fort Hood. Two months after the First Armored Division arrived, the Second Armored Division was shipped to Germany, where it remained for several years as the backbone of NATO's tank operations.

The Army continued to rethink its enlarged mission in the Cold War era, particularly with the advent of new, long-range tank guns. In November 1952, rumors circulated about plans to substantially increase the size of Fort Hood. Recalling the chaos and disorder of the last major taking ten years before, as well as the treatment given farmers and ranchers in the aftermath of massive troop exercises throughout Coryell County and the surrounding area earlier that year, nearby residents flooded Congressman Poage's office with letters and petitions.<sup>25</sup> They remembered the cut fences, pastures churned under tank treads, late compensation payments, and unresponsive government officials.

In July 1953, Congress authorized the Army to acquire nearly 50,000 acres on either side of the (still-filling) Belton Reservoir, only half the land military planners had requested. The Army had to guarantee access to the lake for recreational use, make prompt and equitable payments for the land taken, and, wherever possible, provide funds for moving expenses. This taking was far smoother than the earlier ones.<sup>26</sup> The average price per acre was twice that paid in 1942, even though the land was almost totally confined to the limestone uplands—the worst agricultural land in the region. But while the time allotted for moving was substantially increased, the transition still caught people off guard. A number of those forced to move were farmers and ranchers who had relocated there after the first taking.

Over the next five decades, Fort Hood experienced fluctuations in its tactical mission, its division headquarters, and, of course, its population.

Each fluctuation sent ripples through the surrounding communities. During and after World War II, most residents in Bell and Coryell Counties continued to live in rural areas. But in the mid-1950s, a building boom accompanied the reactivation of the Fourth Armored Division. The reactivation made Fort Hood a two-division post and Copperas Cove a bedroom community. Copperas Cove increased its size at a spectacular pace. And as farming and stock raising became less profitable, more and more folks moved into town, accompanied by more soldiers, retired military personnel, and construction workers.<sup>27</sup>

Killeen also experienced renewed growth in the mid-1950s, as local workers helped build many of the new permanent structures, laid water pipe from Belton Lake, and paved new roads on the base. Killeen, more so than surrounding towns, had to cope with issues of ethnic and racial integration: German war brides after World War II, followed by immigrations of Koreans in the 1950s and Vietnamese in the 1970s, all contributed to the cultural diversity of the city. Moreover, the increasing presence of African American soldiers in the integrated Army forced Killeen to confront racial segregation sooner than other areas of the state. In 1944, Lieutenant Jackie Robinson, the man who would later integrate professional baseball in the 1950s, helped integrate military transportation when he refused to sit at the back of a chartered commercial Army bus when ordered to do so. He was court-martialed for insubordination, but the judges ruled in his favor.<sup>28</sup> In succeeding years, Killeen came a long way from the days when Oran Raney locked his black helper in at night for his own protection. Presently, about 11 percent of the population of Killeen is African American.

Fort Hood's impact on the region outweighs everything else. It has made Copperas Cove the largest city in Coryell County, more than twice the size of Gatesville. The population of Killeen now surpasses that of Temple and Belton together; indeed, when combined with its suburb, Harker Heights, the population of 102,000 residents is almost 50 percent of the total Bell County population.<sup>29</sup> In the 1970s, Frank Mayborn tried to get Temple and Belton designated as a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), a move that would have attracted more business. However, to reach the baseline population needed to qualify, Mayborn had to include not only Killeen and Harker Heights, but also Copperas Cove. The Temple-Belton-Killeen SMSA comprises all the Fort Hood towns along U.S. Highway 190. In contrast, the population of Gatesville in 1997 was even less than that of Harker Heights.

The continued prosperity of the southern string of Fort Hood cities seems assured. From Bell County's perspective, the arrival of Camp Hood transformed a rural county into an urbanized region of high growth and unlimited potential. Total income in Bell County for 1997 exceeded that of McLennan County (home county for Waco), and average personal income placed Bell County near the top third in the state, competing with metropolitan counties and counties heavily involved in oil and ranching industries. By contrast, the average personal income for Coryell County residents in 1997 was less than any of the surrounding counties and less than one fourth that of Bell County.<sup>30</sup> The sacrifice of those once living within the boundaries of Camp Hood has become the sacrifice of Coryell County itself.

But those who left their land in 1942 and 1943 did so as part of a larger effort to prepare the nation for the challenges of fighting a war on two fronts. Although a postwar survey of Bell County suggested that residents there were not bitter about the government taking their land, most in Coryell County continue to express a profound sadness and sense of loss.<sup>31</sup> Former residents of the Camp Hood lands still return occasionally, over fifty years after they left. With the houses, stores, churches, and schools of the former communities long gone, it is the cemeteries and reunions that serve as focal points—reasons to return to Fort Hood. The Army exhumed and moved graves at many of the cemeteries years ago, but some of the old family and community cemeteries remain on the base—fenced, protected, and maintained by the Army. Relatives still visit on a regular basis, and people are still buried there from time to time. It is easy to recall the old times standing in one of the cemeteries.

Reunions serve a similar purpose; what may have begun as a few people getting together at someone's house to reminisce about old times, or visiting a cemetery, has grown through time into a system of formal annual reunions where families or whole communities get together to share stories about the old days, about the way it was before Camp Hood. The reunions help solidify relationships among people who once lived close together, shared good times, and suffered common hardships. For Annie Lois Bond, the reunions are a trip back in time. She summarized the thoughts of many, saying, "The feeling of peace and serenity overlaid with sadness lingers . . . a while."<sup>32</sup>

After driving along barely visible trails that were once roads, past cedar-choked thickets where their houses once stood, families arrive at one of the

# REUNIONS

As soon as people left their lands to make way for the U.S. Army they began to get nostalgic. Each person had his or her own favorite memories, such as the smell of mom's apple pie, swimming in Owl Creek on a hot summer's day, or the satisfaction of a hard day's work on the farm. Nostalgia is all about keeping those memories alive, and one way of doing that is to hold reunions. Like families and other groups all across the country, many former Camp Hood residents hold annual reunions. Some are family reunions, where extended families like the Browns

from Turnover Creek return each year to the old family home place to socialize and reminisce. Others are community reunions, where many families from one or more former communities get together to have potluck dinners, swap old photographs, tell tall tales, and pass on stories to the younger generations. The Friendship Reunion, for example, is held each year at the Friendship Cemetery, inside the Live Fire Range on Fort Hood. The reunion is always held on Memorial Day weekend, the one time each year when the Army allows civilians to go out with an Army escort into the area where tanks fire live ammunition. Such reunions, wherever they occur, involve the

people who once lived on the Camp Hood lands. Most are now elderly—a sixty-eight year old at the year 2000 reunion was ten in 1942. They often bring their entire families—sons and daughters, spouses, and grandkids. They want them all to know their stories.



Photo by Jack Rehm

Above: Friendship Reunion,  
May 24, 1998, at the Friendship  
Cemetery, Live Fire Range,  
Fort Hood, Texas

Right: Antelope-Eliga Reunion,  
May 3, 1998, at Lampasas, Texas



Photo by Jack Rehm



(L-R) Colonel Frank Aubrey Black (U.S. Air Force, Ret.), Ana Mae Black Sheets, and Donald Barclay Sheets at the Ruth Cemetery on Fort Hood, Memorial Day, May 26, 1996 (courtesy of Mr. Frank Black).

fenced cemeteries for a reunion. The kids play while the adults talk. Sitting on folding chairs, they all share a meal, look at old photographs and take new ones, and talk about old times. The older ones recall their days on the farm or ranch and speak of hard work, lean times, and good feelings among neighbors. Conversations often turn to the Army and World War II—the sacrifices that were made. Inevitably, they talk about the imprint they left upon the land.

# ENDNOTES

## Chapter 1. From a Thumbprint on a Map

1. Fort Hood is one of the larger military bases in the United States, at 339 square miles, but is only the second largest headquartered in Texas, Fort Bliss (near El Paso in Texas and New Mexico) being about five times larger (1,758 square miles).

2. Odie B. Faulk and Laura E. Faulk, *Fort Hood, The First Fifty Years* (Temple, Tex.: The Frank W. Mayborn Foundation, 1990), p. 39.

3. Cesare Salmaggi and Alfredo Pallavisini, *2,194 Days of War*, trans. Hugh Young (New York: Mayflower Books, 1979).

4. Geoffrey Perret, *There's a War to Be Won, The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 26-29, 31.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

6. Faulk and Faulk, *Fort Hood*, p. 21.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

8. Odie Faulk and Laura E. Faulk, *Frank W. Mayborn: A Man Who Made a Difference* (Temple, Tex.: University of Mary Hardin Baylor Press, 1989), p. 82. Mayborn enthusiastically backed Poage in his 1936 campaign to gain the congressional seat for the Eleventh District against Frank Tirey. Poage had run against incumbent congressman Oliver H. Cross in 1934 and lost.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

## Chapter 2. A Special Kind of Land, a Special Kind of Place

1. Odie B. Faulk and Laura E. Faulk, *Fort Hood, The First Fifty Years* (Temple, Tex.: The Frank W. Mayborn Foundation, 1990), p. 28.

2. Linda Wootan Ellis, G. Lain Ellis, and Charles D. Frederick, "Implications of Environmental Diversity in the Central Texas Archeological Region," *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society* 66 (1995):401-426. Ellis et al. give a short discussion of a few of the leading arguments for the formal location of central Texas, accompanied by a useful diagram on p. 403.

3. Odie B. Faulk and Laura E. Faulk, *Frank W. Mayborn: A Man Who Made a Difference* (Temple, Tex.: University of Mary Hardin Baylor Press, 1989), p. 87.

4. Sylvia Ann Edwards, "Land Acquisition in Coryell County, Texas, for the Formation of Camp Hood, 1942-1945: A Civilian Perspective" (Master's thesis, Baylor University, 1988), p. 15.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

6. Faulk and Faulk, *Fort Hood*, p. 30.

7. An average of \$10.46 per acre near Valley Mills compared to \$6.12 per acre northwest of Killeen. Zelma Scott, *A History of Coryell County* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1965), p. 201. Faulk and Faulk, *Fort Hood*, quote these same figures.

8. Faulk and Faulk, *Fort Hood*, p. 31.

9. Edwards, "Land Acquisition," pp. 12, 28.

10. Faulk and Faulk, *Fort Hood*, p. 33.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

12. Geological information derives from two main sources. First and foremost is Darwin Spearing, *Roadside Geology of Texas* (Missoula, Mont.: Mountain Press Publishing, 1991), pp. 3–11. The other source is Eric R. Swanson, *Geo-Texas, A Guide to the Earth Sciences* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), pp. 61–73.

13. Pronounced Bal-CON-ees, Spanish for balcony.

14. The largest quantities of limestone were laid down all across Texas 120 million years ago.

15. Kathy Svitil, "The Crystal Bearing River," *Discover Magazine*, January 1997, p. 26.

16. Jacob De Cordova, *Texas: Her Resources and Her Public Men: A Companion for J. De Cordova's Correct Map of the State of Texas* (Philadelphia: E. Crozet, 1858), p. 212.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

### Chapter 3. Tracing the Land: Prehistory to 1820

1. Wayne Gard, *The Great Buffalo Hunt* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), p. 7. Now out of print, Gard's book makes for informative and entertaining reading on this subject.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10.

3. Frank Gilbert Roe, *The North American Buffalo: A Critical Study of the Species in its Wild State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951). Roe examines every known statement written about the buffalo during the nineteenth century and before.

4. Gard, *Buffalo Hunt*, p. 10.

5. David J. Meltzer and Michael R. Bever, "Paleoindians of Texas: An Update on the Texas Clovis Fluted Point Survey," *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society* 66 (1995):47–81.

6. Regrettably, a great deal of crucial scientific evidence has been lost because archeological sites are frequently destroyed by relic collectors who dig to retrieve arrow points, pottery sherds, bones, and other artifacts to display or sell. Even sites located on Fort Hood (and under the protection of federal laws) are not immune to destruction by looters. The Army has made a great effort over the past two decades to locate, identify, assess, and preserve as much of what remains of those ancient peoples as possible.

7. Michael B. Collins, "Forty Years of Archeology in Central Texas," *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society* 66 (1995):361–400.

8. Donald Chipman, *Spanish Texas 1519–1821* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), p. 12. Chipman quotes Thomas N. Campbell as saying that Cabeza de Vaca "looms large as an ethnographer," and adds that the cultural information in his report "is superior to all other sources combined."

9. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

11. Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Coronado, Knight of Pueblos and Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1949), p. 188.

12. Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, p. 15.

13. W. W. Newcomb, *The Indians of Texas, From Prehistoric to Modern Times* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), p. 134.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 141–149.

15. Edward W. Heusinger, *Early Explorations and Mission Establishments in Texas* (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1936), p. 140.

16. Gerald Ashford, *Spanish Texas, Yesterday and Today* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 156–157.

17. V. Kay Hindes, Mark R. Wolf, Grant D. Hall, and Kathleen Kirk Gilmore. *The Rediscovery of Santa Cruz de San Sabá, A Mission for the Apache in Spanish Texas* (Austin: Texas Historical Foundation and Texas Tech University, 1995), pp. 5–7.

18. T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star, A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1968), pp. 60–62.

#### Chapter 4. Boundaries Drawn and Crossed: 1820-1848

1. T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star, A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1968), pp. 134-135.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
3. Mary Virginia Henderson, "Minor Empresario Contracts for the Colonization of Texas, 1825-1834," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 31 (April 1928):316.
4. Lelia A. Batte, *History of Milam County, Texas* (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1956), p. 12.
5. Henderson, "Empresario Contracts," p. 317.
6. The Mexican government issued forty empresario contracts between 1822 and 1835; of those, only a dozen or so remained in force when the Texas Revolution swept the system away. Most were cancelled years earlier for failure to meet the settlement deadline.
7. Henderson, "Empresario Contracts," p. 297. After trying unsuccessfully to pass a law banning slavery in Texas, the government activated Article 7 of the 1824 colonization law, a provision that permitted a selective ban on immigration if "imperious circumstances should require it." General Mier y Terán convinced them it did.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 319.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 322. "Oliver Jones wrote James F. Perry that he believed it cost Robertson a bribe of thirteen hundred dollars."
11. William C. Pool, *Bosque Territory: A History of an Agrarian Community* (Kyle, Tex.: Chaparral Press, 1964), p. 22.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
13. Rupert Richardson, Ernest Wallace, and Adrian N. Anderson, *Texas, The Lone Star State*, 3d ed. (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 81.
14. Batte, *History*, p. 26.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.
16. Richardson et al., *Texas*, p. 50.
17. Newton C. Duncan, "Reminiscences of James Coryell and Levy Taylor and Short Account of an Indian Massacre in 1837," In *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Reunion of Old Settlers Association of Bell County* (Belton, Tex.: *Belton Journal-Reporter*, 1903), pp. 18-19. Cited in Homer Clayton Laxson, "Growth and Development of Coryell County, Texas, from 1850-1950" (Master's thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1951), p. 11.
18. Records of the General Land Office; Robertson's Colony, 771-775, cited in George W. Tyler, *The History of Bell County* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1936), pp. 39-42.
19. Newton C. Duncan testified in 1903 that in May 1837, as a young boy, he had been invited by Coryell on that fateful morning to join him and a few friends. Duncan was distracted by a chore when Coryell and his five companions rode out of Sarahville de Viesca, leaving him behind.
20. Summer 1837, *The World Almanac of the American West*, ed. John S. Bowman (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), p. 114.

#### Chapter 5. First Impressions: 1848-1865

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2. Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty of Peace (1848) and Gads[d]en Treaty with Mexico (1853), reprinted from New Mexico statutes, annotated Vol. 1 (Truchas, N. Mex.: Tate Gallery, 1967), p. 19.
3. Martha Doty Freeman, *A History of Fort Phantom Hill, The Post on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River, Jones County, Texas* (Abilene, Tex.: The Fort Phantom Foundation, 1999), pp. 40-55. Freeman's report includes the names of private individuals and military personnel who owned land on which forts were built.
4. Zelma Scott, *A History of Coryell County* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1965), p. 9.



5. Ibid., p. 11.
6. Ibid., p. 10. Reports by Assistant Surgeon Johns are often cited for these weather conditions, particularly by Arrie Barrett, "Western Frontier Forts of Texas," in *Yearbook VII of West Texas Historical Association* (Abilene, Tex.: West Texas Historical Association, 1931), p. 123.
7. George W. Tyler, *The History of Bell County* (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1936), p. 88. Today, Interstate 35 follows the Military Road from Austin to Belton, after which it parallels the old route to Waco about three miles to the east.
8. U.S. Bureau of Topographical Engineers, *Map of Texas and Part of New Mexico compiled in the Bureau of Topographl. Engrs. chiefly for military purposes, 1857*. Map No. 1667, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin. Also see map "Lieutenant W. H. C. Whiting's route from Fort Croghan through Fort Gates, 1850," reproduced in Scott, *A History*, and description given by Tyler, *History of Bell County*, p. 88.
9. Lieutenant Horace Haldeman, acting assistant quartermaster at Fort Gates, 1850 report to Quartermaster General, cited in Scott, *A History*, p. 10.
10. Scott, *A History*, p. 28.
11. F. M. Cross, *A Short Sketch—History from Personal Reminiscences of Early Days in Central Texas*, 2d ed. (Brownwood, Tex.: Greenwood Printing, 1910), pp. 14–15.
12. Lelia A. Batte, *History of Milam County, Texas* (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1956), p. 52.
13. Thomas A. Cutrer, *The English Texans* (San Antonio: The University of Texas, Institute of Texan Cultures, 1985), pp. 45–47.
14. Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue; the United States Army and the Indian, 1848–1865* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), p. 72.
15. Robert Wooster, "Military Strategy in the Southwest, 1848–1860," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest* 15 (1977):9.
16. Ibid., p. 9.
17. Freeman, *History*, pp. 59–62, 70–71.
18. The Lewis Publishing Company, *A Memorial and Biographical History of McLennan, Falls, Bell, and Coryell Counties, Texas* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1893), p. 301.
19. Elma Powell Blanchard, *History of the Progress and Problems of Journalism in Coryell County* (Gatesville, Tex.: Stanley Edwards Press, 1976), p. 1.
20. Scott, *A History*, p. 36.
21. John H. Chrisman, "History of Coryell County, Incomplete: Taken from Scrapbook in Archives, 1945," Scrapbook Collection, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. The citizens of Coryell County are fortunate to have this documentation by Chrisman. Apparently, in 1870 a traveler took a keen interest in Chrisman's handwritten manuscript and asked to read it. Chrisman left him in the office reading the manuscript while he went to dinner, and, when he returned, "the man and the manuscript were both gone and it was the last I ever saw of it." Undeterred, Chrisman sat down and rewrote the entire book a second time. Portions were read during pioneer celebrations in 1903. Sometime later (the exact date and newspaper are unknown), a Texas newspaper published the complete book as a series of installments. An incomplete set of that series can be found in The Center for American History, preserved as clippings and later transcribed by WPA workers in the 1930s. The first few pages and the closing chapters apparently are lost for all time.
22. J. J. Bishop, *The Rise and Fall of Sparta. A History of its Beginning and its End* (Brownsville, Tex.: Privately printed, [1952]), p. 29. Wood from soft pines was virtually unknown in central Texas until the railroads brought the first loads from east Texas in the 1870s.
23. Cross, *Short Sketch*, p. 28.
24. Chrisman, "History of Coryell County."
25. Tyler, *History of Bell County*.
26. Bishop, *Rise and Fall of Sparta*, p. 3.

27. "Life in Central Texas After Civil War," *Georgetown Sun*, 18 August 1933, Box 3L89, Scrapbook Collection, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

28. Jennifer A. Stabler, *Historical Research Preliminary to National Register Assessments of 719 Historical Sites at Fort Hood, Bell and Coryell Counties, Texas*. United States Army Fort Hood, Archeological Resource Management Series Research Report No. 36 (Austin: Prewitt and Associates, 1999), pp. 100, 125, 387.

29. Martha Doty Freeman, Amy E. Dase, and Marie E. Blake, *Agriculture and Rural Development on Fort Hood Lands, 1849-1942: National Register Assessments of 710 Historic Archeological Properties*. United States Army Fort Hood, Archeological Resource Management Series Research Report No. 42 (Austin: Prewitt and Associates, 2001), pp. 76-77.

30. John Hoyt Williams, *A Great and Shining Road: The Epic Story of the Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Times Books, 1988), p. 21.

31. S. G. Reed, *A History of the Texas Railroads* (New York: Arno Press, 1981), p. 96.

32. Williams, *Shining Road*, p. 24.

33. Reed, *Texas Railroads*, p. 142. Of the nine railroad charters that had been granted since 1846, only one had begun work by 1852. Learning of the rapid progress on the Illinois Central, built through a system of land grants, the Texas legislature amended the one active charter to include eight sections of land per mile constructed. No significant effect occurred in two years, so in 1854 the legislature doubled the land grant.

34. Lucy A. Erath, comp., "Memoirs of Major George B. Erath" (Box 2Q507, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin), p. 95.

35. Thomas J. Keese to The Honorable William Ellison, 28 July 1856, WPA Coryell County Box 4H294, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

36. Chrisman, "History of Coryell County."

37. Freeman et al., *Agriculture*, p. 11.

38. Chrisman, "History of Coryell County."

39. Jacob De Cordova, *Texas: Her Resources and Her Public Men: A Companion for J. De Cordova's New and Correct Map of the State of Texas* (Philadelphia: E. Crozet, 1858), p. 213.

40. Chrisman, "History of Coryell County."

41. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

42. Bishop, *Rise and Fall of Sparta*, p. 17. Samuel Bishop returned four years later, having participated in several major battles, including the very last one, fought near Brownsville, Texas, a month after Appomattox (the Confederates won).

43. J. Z. Miller to Allan D. Sanford, 22 July 1929. Letter from J. Z. Miller Jr. to Allan D. Sanford, Attorney, inclosing [*sic*] Narrative of Business Activities of J. Z. Miller and W. A. Miller in Particular and of R. C. Miller Incidentally (n.p.: Privately printed, 1988), p. 32.

44. Chrisman, "History of Coryell County."

45. Scott, *A History*, p. 60.

46. Erath, "Memoirs."

47. Chrisman, "History of Coryell County."

## Chapter 6. Livestock and Steel Prosperity: 1865-1890

1. *Lincolntown at Moccasin Bend: Black Families on the Texas Frontier* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Institute of Oral History, 1987), sound cassette.

2. Clyde Bailey and Mabel Bailey, *Vignettes of Coryell County* (Gatesville, Tex.: Gatesville Printing Company, 1976), p. 36.

3. J. J. Bishop, *The Rise and Fall of Sparta, A History of its Beginning and its End* (Brownsville, Tex.: Privately printed, [1952]), pp. 14-15. As Army surgeons prepared to amputate Adam Clements's leg, he rose up from the operating table wielding a dirk knife, threatening anyone who dared touch him; the doctors left him

to his fate. A young doctor found him near death three days later and extracted the bullet and fragments from his hip. Clements lived to be almost eighty-nine years old.

4. Bailey and Bailey, *Vignettes*, p. 32.
5. Bishop, *Rise and Fall of Sparta*, p. 17.
6. Bailey and Bailey, *Vignettes*, p. 33.
7. J. M. Franks, *Seventy Years in Texas: Memories of the Pioneer Days, Indian Depredations and Northwest Cattle Trail* (Gatesville, Tex.: Privately printed, 1924), p. 67.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
9. Bell County Historical Commission, *Story of Bell County, Texas*, vol. 1 (Austin: Eakin Press, 1988), pp. 50–51.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53.
11. John H. Chrisman, "History of Coryell County, Incomplete: Taken from Scrapbook in Archives, 1945," Scrapbook Collection, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.
12. George W. Tyler, *The History of Bell County* (San Antonio: Naylor Company), pp. 275–277.
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### Chapter 9. Looking Forward, Looking Back: 1942–2000

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10. Mildred Watkins Mears, "Three Forts in Coryell County," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 67 (July 1963):13.
11. Edwards, "Land Acquisition," p. 20.
12. Ibid., pp. 41-50.
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17. If Frank Mayborn expressed any regrets over the disproportionate sacrifice Coryell County residents bore as a result of his effort on behalf of Bell County, they will not be found in the 250-page authorized biography that he helped fund (Faulk and Faulk, *Frank Mayborn*). By the end of 1942, Frank Mayborn could look with pride at the government projects he had brought to Temple and Bell County—McCloskey General Hospital, Blackland Auxiliary Flying Field, and an upgraded Temple airport, not to mention the Bluebonnet Ordnance Plant in McGregor and the prisoner of war camp in North Camp Hood. By then, Temple held nearly half of the services provided in the county. New facilities and wartime prosperity brought a boom to Temple, increasing the population to over 25,000 and allowing Mayborn, then serving as Public Relations Officer for General George Marshall, to raise the advertising rates for his newspaper.
18. Anice Thompson Vance to Douglas Boyd, 28 April 2000, Prewitt and Associates, Austin, Texas.
19. Killeen Project 1930s, Inc., *Unforgettable Decade*, p. 538. As a relative newcomer and president of the only bank from Copperas Cove to Kempner, Minor was characterized by many people as a tight-fisted, unsympathetic bean counter, whereas C. R. Clements, the bank's vice president, had better people skills, if not more flexibility in making loans. According to rumor, Minor got miffed at the Army after they seized some of his farmland. It could only have been a rumor, for Minor got almost \$100 an acre for his 141-acre tract a full year after the troubles began.
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## CHRONOLOGIES

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- Chapter 3: Detail from *Abraham Ortelius, Americae Sive Novi Orbis, Nova Descriptio, Antwerp 1570*. Courtesy of The San Jacinto Museum of History, Houston.
- Chapter 4: Detail from *A New Map of Texas, with the Contiguous American & Mexican States by J. H. Young*. Published by S. Augustus Mitchell, Philadelphia, 1837. Map No. 7676. Courtesy of the Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin.
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- Chapter 7: USGS topographic 30-minute map, Gatesville, TX quadrangle, 1918.
- Chapter 8: Official map of the highway system of Texas, 1935.
- Chapter 9: State of Texas, United States Department of the Interior, Geological Survey, 1985.

## SIDEBARS

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